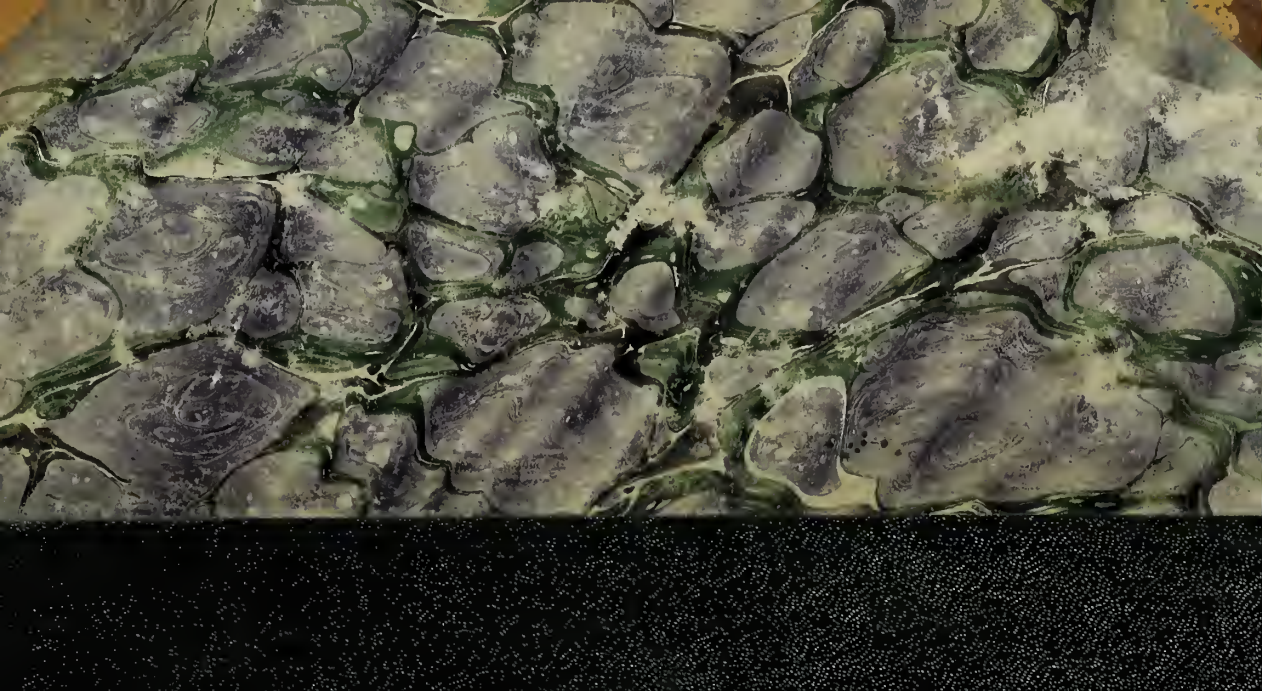

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THE

WORKS

OF THE

Rev. JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

Late Fellow of *Lincoln-College*, OXFORD.

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SERMON XXXI.

UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

DISCOURSE XI.

MATT. vii. 13, 14.

Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be which go thereat:

Becauſe ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

1. OUR Lord having warned us of the dangers, which eaſily beſet us at our firſt entrance upon real religion, the hindrances which naturally ariſe from within, from the wickedneſs of our own hearts: now proceeds to apprize us of the hindrances from without, particularly ill example and ill advice. By one or the other of theſe, thouſands who once ran well, have drawn back unto perdition: yea, many of thoſe who were not novices in religion, who had made ſome progreſs in righteouſneſs. His caution

therefore againſt theſe, he preſſes upon us, with all poſſible earneſtneſs, and repeats again and again, in variety of expreſſions, leſt by any means we ſhould let it ſlip. Thus, effectually to guard us againſt the former, *Enter ye in*, ſaith he, *at the ſtrait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be which go in thereat: becauſe ſtrait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* To ſecure us from the latter, *beware*, ſaith he, *of falſe prophets.* We ſhall at preſent conſider the former only.

2. *Enter ye in*, ſaith our bleſſed Lord, *at the ſtrait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be which go in thereat: becauſe ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

3. In theſe words we may obſerve, firſt, The inſeparable properties of the way to hell: *Wide is the gate, broad the way that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be that go in thereat:* ſecondly, the inſeparable properties of the way to heaven: *Strait is that gate, and few there be that find it:* thirdly, a ſerious exhortation grounded thereon, *Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate.*

I. 1. We may obſerve, firſt, The inſeparable properties of the way to hell: *Wide is the gate and*

and broad is the way, that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be that go in thereat.

Wide indeed is the gate, and broad the way that leadeth to deſtruction. For ſin is the gate of hell, and wickedneſs the way to deſtruction. And how wide a gate is that of ſin? How broad is the way of wickedneſs! The *commandment* of God *is exceeding broad*, as extending not only to all our actions, but to every word which goeth out of our lips, yea, every thought that riſes in our heart. And ſin is equally broad with the commandment, ſeeing any breach of the commandment is ſin. Yea, rather it is a thouſand times broader: ſince there is only one way of keeping the commandment: for we do not properly keep it, unleſs both the thing done, the manner of doing it, and all the other circumſtances are right. But there are a thouſand ways of breaking every commandment: ſo that this gate is wide indeed.

3. To conſider this a little more particularly. How wide do thoſe parent ſins extend, from which all the reſt derive their being? *That carnal mind, which is enmity againſt* God, pride of heart, ſelf-will and love of the world? Can we fix any bounds to them? Do they not diffuſe themſelves thro' all our thoughts, and mingle with all our tempers? Are they not the leaven which leavens, more or leſs, the whole maſs of our affections? May we not, on a cloſe and faithful examination of ourſelves, perceive theſe

roots of bitterneſs, continually ſpringing up, infecting all our words, and tainting all our actions? And how innumerable an offspring do they bring forth, in every age and nation? Even enough to cover the whole earth with *darkneſs and cruel habitations.*

4. O! who is able to reckon up their accurſed fruits? To count all the ſins, whether againſt God or our neighbour, not which imagination might paint, but which may be matter of daily, melancholy experience? Nor need we range over all the earth to find them. Survey any one kingdom, any ſingle country, or city or town, and how plenteous is this harveſt? And let it not be one of thoſe, which are ſtill overſpread with Mahometan or Pagan darkneſs: but of thoſe which name the name of Chriſt, which profeſs to ſee the light of his glorious goſpel. Go no farther than the kingdom to which we belong, the city wherein we are now. We call ourſelves Chriſtians: yea, and that of the pureſt ſort; we are Proteſtants; reformed Chriſtians! But alas! who ſhall carry on the reformation of our opinions into our hearts and lives? Is there not a cauſe? For how innumerable are our ſins? And thoſe of the deepeſt dye? Do not the groſſeſt abominations of every kind, abound among us from day to day? Do not ſins of every ſort cover the land, as the waters cover the ſea? Who can count them? Rather go and count the drops of rain, or the ſands on the ſea-ſhore. So *wide*

is

is the gate, ſo *broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction.*

5. *And many there be who go in at* that gate: many who walk in that way. Almoſt as many as go in at the gate of death, as ſink into the chambers of the grave. For it cannot be denied, (tho' neither can we acknowledge it but with ſhame and ſorrow of heart) that even in this, which is called a Chriſtian country, the generality of every age and ſex, of every profeſſion and employment, of every rank and degree, high and low, rich and poor, are walking in the way of deſtruction. The far greater part of the inhabitants of this city, to this day live in ſin; in ſome palpable, habitual, known tranſgreſſion of the law they profeſs to obſerve: yea, in ſome outward tranſgreſſion, ſome groſs, viſible kind of ungodlineſs or unrighteouſneſs; ſome open violation of their duty, either to God or man. Theſe then, none can deny, are all in the way that leadeth to deſtruction. Add to theſe thoſe who *have a name* indeed *that they live,* but were never yet alive to God: thoſe that outwardly appear fair to men, but are inwardly full of all uncleanneſs: full of pride, or vanity; of anger, or revenge; of ambition, or covetouſneſs: lovers of themſelves, lovers of the world, lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God. Theſe indeed may be highly eſteemed of men; but they are an abomination to the Lord. And how greatly will theſe ſaints of the world, ſwell the num-

ber of the children of hell? Yea, add all, whatever they be in other reſpects, whether they have more or leſs of the form of godlineſs, who *being ignorant of* God's *righteouſneſs, and ſeeking to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs*, as the ground of their reconcilation to God and acceptance with him, of conſequence have *not ſubmitted themſelves unto the righteouſneſs which is of* God *by faith*. Now all theſe things being joined together in one, how terribly true is our Lord's aſſertion, *Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be who go in thereat.*

6. Nor does this only concern the vulgar herd, the poor, baſe, ſtupid part of mankind. Men of eminence in the world, men who have many fields and yoke of oxen, do not deſire to be excuſed from this. On the contrary, *many wiſe men after the fleſh*, according to the human methods of judging, *many mighty*, in power, in courage, in riches, many *noble are called:* called into the broad way, by the world, the fleſh and the devil; and they are not diſobedient to that calling. Yea, the higher they are raiſed in fortune and power, the deeper do they ſink into wickedneſs. The more bleſſings they have received from God, the more ſins do they commit: uſing their honour or riches, their learning or wiſdom, not as means of working out their ſalvation, but rather of excelling

celling in vice, and so insuring their own destruction.

II. 1. And the very reason why many of these go on so securely in the *broad way*, is because it is broad: not considering that this is the inseparable property of the way to destruction. *Many there be*, saith our Lord, *who go in thereat:* for the very reason why they should flee from it; Even *because strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

2. This is an inseparable property of the way to heaven. So narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, unto life everlasting; so strait the gate, that nothing unclean, nothing unholy can enter. No sinner can pass thro' that gate, until he is saved from all his sins, not only from his outward sins; from his evil *conversation received by tradition from his Fathers.* It will not suffice, that he hath *ceased to do evil*, and *learned to do well.* He must not only be saved from all sinful actions, and from all evil and useless discourse; but inwardly changed, throughly renewed in the spirit of his mind. Otherwise he cannot pass thro' the gate of life, he cannot enter into glory.

3. For *narrow is the way that leadeth unto life:* the way of universal holiness. Narrow indeed is the way of poverty of spirit, the way of holy mourning: the way of meekness, and that

of hungring and thirſting after righteouſneſs. Narrow is the way of mercifulneſs, of love unfeigned; the way of purity of heart; of doing good unto all men, and of gladly ſuffering evil, all manner of evil for righteouſneſs-ſake.

4. *And few there be that find it.* Alas! how few find even the way of Heathen honeſty? How few are there, that do nothing to another, which they would not another ſhould do unto them? How few, that are clear before God, from acts either of injuſtice or unkindneſs? How few, that do not *offend with their tongue*; that ſpeak nothing unkind, nothing untrue? What a ſmall proportion of mankind, are innocent even of outward tranſgreſſions? And how much ſmaller a proportion have their hearts right before God? Clean and holy in his ſight? Where are they, whom his all-ſearching eye, diſcerns to be truly humble? To abhor themſelves in duſt and aſhes, in the preſence of God their Saviour? To be deeply and ſteadily ſerious, feeling their wants, and *paſſing the time of their ſojourning with fear?* Truly meek and gentle, never *overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good?* Throughly athirſt for God, and continually panting after a renewal in his likeneſs? How thinly are they ſcattered over the earth, whoſe ſouls are inlarged in love to all mankind? And who love God with all their ſtrength, who have given him their hearts, and deſire nothing elſe in earth or heaven? How few are thoſe lovers of God and man, that

ſpend

ſpend their whole ſtrength in doing good unto all men? and are ready to ſuffer all things, yea, death itſelf, to ſave one ſoul from eternal death?

5. But while ſo few are found in the way of life, and ſo many in the way of deſtruction, there is great danger, leſt the torrent of examples, ſhould bear us away with them. Even as a ſingle example, if it be always in our ſight, is apt to make much impreſſion upon us: eſpecially when it has nature on its ſide; when it falls in with our own inclinations. How great then muſt be the force of ſo numerous examples, continually before our eyes; and all conſpiring together with our own hearts, to carry us down the ſtream of nature? How difficult muſt it be, to ſtem the tide, and to keep ourſelves *unſpotted in the world?*

6. What heightens the difficulty ſtill more is, that they are not the rude and ſenſeleſs part of mankind, at leaſt not theſe alone, who ſet us the example, who throng the downward way: but the polite, the well-bread, the genteel, the wiſe, the men who underſtand the world: the men of knowledge, of deep and various learning, the rational, the eloquent! Theſe are all, or nearly all, againſt us. And how ſhall we ſtand againſt theſe? Does not their tongues, drop manna? And have they not learned all the arts of ſoft perſuaſion? And of reaſoning too: for theſe are verſed in all controverſies and ſtrife

of words. It is therefore a ſmall thing with them to prove, that the way is *right*, becauſe it is *broad:* that he who follows a multitude, cannot do evil, but only he who will not follow them: that your way muſt be *wrong*, becauſe it is *narrow*; and becauſe there are ſo few that find it. Theſe will make it clear to a demonſtration, that evil is good, and good is evil: That the way of holineſs is the way of deſtruction, and the way of the world, the only way to heaven.

7. O how can unlearned and ignorant men, maintain their cauſe againſt ſuch opponents! And yet theſe are not all with whom they muſt contend, however unequal to the taſk. For there are many mighty, and noble, and powerful men, as well as wiſe, in the road that leadeth to deſtruction. And theſe have a ſhorter way of confuting, than that of reaſon and argument. They uſually apply, not to the underſtanding, but to the fears of any that oppoſe them. A method that ſeldom fails of ſucceſs, even where argument profits nothing: as lying level to the capacities of all men: for all can fear, whether they can reaſon or no. And all who have not a firm truſt in God, a ſure reliance both on his power and love, cannot but fear to give any diſguſt to thoſe, who have the power of the world in their hands. What wonder therefore if the example of theſe is a law, to all who know not God?

8. Many

8. Many rich are likewiſe in the broad way. And theſe apply to the hopes of men, and to all their fooliſh deſires, as ſtrongly and effectually, as the mighty and noble to their fears. So that hardly can you hold on in the way of the kingdom, unleſs you are dead to all below, unleſs you are crucified to the world and the world crucified to you, unleſs you deſire nothing more but God.

9. For how dark, how uncomfortable, how forbidding is the proſpect on the oppoſite ſide? A ſtrait gate! A narrow way! And few finding that gate! Few walking in the way. Beſides, even thoſe few, are not wiſe men, not men of learning or eloquence. They are not able to reaſon either ſtrongly or clearly; they cannot propoſe an argument to any advantage. they know not how to prove what they profeſs to believe; or to explain even what they ſay they experience. Surely ſuch advocates as theſe, will never recommend, but rather diſcredit the cauſe they have eſpouſed.

10. Add to this, that they are not noble, not honourable men: (if they were, you might bear with their folly.) They are men of no intereſt, no authority, of no account in the world. They are mean and baſe, low in life; and ſuch as have no power, if they had the will to hurt you. Therefore there is nothing at all to be feared from them: and there is nothing at all to hope. For the greater part of them may ſay,

ſilver

ſilver and gold have I none: at leaſt a very moderate ſhare. Nay, ſome of them have ſcarce food to eat or raiment to put on. For this reaſon, as well as becauſe their ways are not like thoſe of other men, they are every where ſpoken againſt, are deſpiſed, have their names caſt out as evil, are variouſly perſecuted, and treated as the filth and offſcouring of the world. So that both your fears, your hopes, and all your deſires, (except thoſe which you have immediately from God) yea, all your natural paſſions continually incline you to return into the broad way.

III. 1. Therefore it is, that our Lord ſo earneſtly exhorts, *Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate.* Or (as the ſame exhortation is elſewhere expreſſed) *Strive to enter in.* Ἀγωνίζεσθε εἰσελθεῖν. Strive as in an agony. *For many*, ſaith our Lord, *ſhall ſeek to enter in*, indolently ſtrive, *and ſhall not be able.*

2. 'Tis true, he intimates what may ſeem another reaſon for this, for their *not being able to enter in*, in the words which immediately follow theſe. For after he had ſaid, *Many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able*, he ſubjoins, *When once the maſter of the houſe is riſen up and hath ſhut to the door, and ye begin to ſtand without* (ἄρξησθε ἔξω ἑστάναι. Rather, *Ye ſtand without*; for ἄρξησθε ſeems to be only an elegant expletive) *and to knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: he ſhall anſwer, and ſay unto*

to you, I know you not. Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. Luke xiii. 26, *&c.*

3. It may appear, upon a tranſient view of theſe words, that their delaying to ſeek at all, rather than their manner of ſeeking, was the reaſon why they were not able to enter in. But it comes, in effect, to the ſame thing. They were therefore commanded to depart, becauſe they had been *workers of iniquity*, becauſe they had walked in the broad road: in other words, becauſe they had not agonized to enter in at the ſtrait gate. Probably they did *ſeek*, before the door was ſhut: but that did not ſuffice. And they did *ſtrive*, after the door was ſhut. But then it was too late.

4. Therefore, *ſtrive* ye now, in this your day, *to enter in at the ſtrait gate.* And in order hereto, ſettle it in your heart, and let it be ever uppermoſt in your thoughts, that if you are in a broad way, you are in the way that leadeth to deſtruction. If many go with you, as ſure as God is true, both they and you are going to hell. If you are walking as the generality of men walk, you are walking to the bottomleſs pit. Are many wiſe, many rich, many mighty or noble travelling with you in the ſame way? By this token, without going any farther, you know, it does not lead to life. Here is a ſhort, a plain, an infallible rule, before you enter into particulars. In whatever profeſſion you are engaged, you muſt be ſingular or be damned. The way

way to hell has nothing ſingular in it; but the way to heaven is ſingularity all over: if you move but one ſtep towards God, you are not as other men are. But regard not this. 'Tis far better to ſtand alone, than to fall into the pit. Run then with patience the race which is ſet before thee, tho' thy companions therein are but few. They will not always be ſo. Yet a little while and thou wilt *come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect.*

5. Now then, *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*, being penetrated with the deepeſt ſenſe, of the inexpreſſible danger your ſoul is in, ſo long as you are in a broad way: ſo long as you are void of poverty of ſpirit, and all that inward religion, which the many, the rich, the wiſe account madneſs. *Strive to enter in*, being pierced with ſorrow and ſhame, for having ſo long run on with the unthinking crowd, utterly neglecting if not deſpiſing that *holineſs, without which no man can ſee the Lord. Strive* as in an agony of holy fear, leſt, *a promiſe being made you of entering into his reſt*, even that *reſt which remaineth for the people of God*, you ſhould nevertheleſs *come ſhort of it.* Strive in all the fervor of deſire, with *groanings which cannot be uttered.* Strive by prayer without ceaſing, at all times, in all places lifting up your heart to God, and giving him no reſt, till you *awake up after his likeneſs* and are *ſatisfied with it.* 6. To

6. To conclude. *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*, not only by this agony of ſoul, of conviction, of ſorrow, of ſhame, of deſire, of fear, of unceaſing prayer, but likewiſe by *ordering* thy *converſation right*, by walking with all thy ſtrength, in all the ways of God, the way of innocence, of piety and of mercy. Abſtain from all appearance of evil: do all poſſible good to all men: deny thyſelf, thy own will, in all things, and take up thy croſs daily. Be ready to cut off thy right hand, to pluck out thy right eye and caſt it from thee: to ſuffer the loſs of goods, friends, health, all things on earth, ſo thou mayſt enter into the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON

SERMON XXXII.

UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

DISCOURSE XII.

MATT. vii. 15—20.

Beware of falſe prophets, which come to you in ſheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Ye ſhall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thiſtles?

Even ſo every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and caſt into the fire.

Wherefore by their fruits ye ſhall know them.

1. IT is ſcarce poſſible to expreſs or conceive, what multitudes of ſouls run on to deſtruction, becauſe they would not be perſuaded to walk in a *narrow* way, even tho' it were the way to everlaſting ſalvation. And the ſame thing we may ſtill obſerve daily. Such is the folly and

and madneſs of mankind, that thouſands of men ſtill ruſh on in the way to hell, only becauſe it is a broad way. They walk in it themſelves, becauſe others do: becauſe ſo many periſh, they will add to the number. Such is the amazing influence of example, over the weak, miſerable children of men! It continually peoples the regions of death, and drowns numberleſs ſouls in everlaſting perdition.

2. To warn mankind of this, to guard as many as poſſible againſt this ſpreading contagion, God has commanded his watchmen to cry aloud, and ſhew the people the danger they are in. For this end he has ſent his ſervants the prophets, in their ſucceeding generations, to point out the narrow path, and exhort all men, not to be conformed to this world. But what if the watchmen themſelves fall into the ſnare, againſt which they ſhould warn others? What if *the prophets propheſy deceits?* If they *cauſe the people to err from the way?* What ſhall be done, if they point out as the way to eternal life, what is in truth the way to eternal death? And exhort others to walk, as they do themſelves, in the broad, not the narrow way?

3. Is this an unheard of, is it an uncommon thing? Nay, God knoweth it is not. The inſtances of it are almoſt innumerable. We may find them in every age and nation. But how terrible is this? When the ambaſſadors of God, turn agents for the devil? When they who are commiſſioned

commiſſioned to teach men the way to heaven, do in fact teach them the way to hell? Theſe are like the locuſts of *Egypt*, *which eat up the reſidue that had eſcaped*, that had *remained after the hail*. They devour even the reſidue of men that had eſcaped, that were not deſtroyed by ill example. It is not therefore without cauſe that our wiſe and gracious Maſter, ſo ſolemnly cautions us againſt them: *Beware*, ſaith he, *of falſe prophets, which come to you in ſheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*.

4. A caution this of the utmoſt importance. That it may the more effectually ſink into our hearts, let us inquire, firſt, who theſe falſe prophets are, ſecondly, what appearance they put on, and thirdly, how we may know what they really are, notwithſtanding their fair appearance.

I. 1. We are, firſt, to inquire, who theſe falſe prophets are. And this it is needful to do the more diligently, becauſe theſe very men have ſo laboured to *wreſt this ſcripture, to their own* (tho' not only their own) *deſtruction*. In order therefore to cut off all diſpute, I ſhall raiſe no duſt (as the manner of ſome is) neither uſe any looſe, rhetorical exclamations, to deceive the hearts of the ſimple, but ſpeak rough, plain truths, ſuch as none can deny, who has either underſtanding or modeſty left: and ſuch truths, as have the cloſeſt connexion, with the whole tenor

tenor of the preceding diſcourſe. Whereas too many have interpreted theſe words without any regard to all that went before: as if they bore no manner of relation to the ſermon, in the cloſe of which they ſtand.

2. By *prophets* here (as in many other paſſages of ſcripture, particularly in the New Teſtament) are meant, not thoſe who forctel things to come, but thoſe who ſpeak in the name of God: thoſe men, who profeſs to be ſent of God, to teach others the way to heaven.

Thoſe are *falſe prophets*, who teach a falſe way to heaven, a way which does not lead thither. Or (which comes in the end to the ſame point) who do not teach the true.

3. Every broad way is infallibly a falſe one. Therefore this is one plain, ſure rule, "They who teach men to walk in a broad way, a way that many walk in, are *falſe prophets*."

Again, the true way to heaven is a narrow way. Therefore this is another plain, ſure rule. "They who do not teach men to walk in a narrow way, to be ſingular, are *falſe prophets*."

4. To be more particular. The only true way to heaven, is that pointed out in the preceding ſermon. Therefore they are *falſe prophets* who do not teach men to walk in *this way*.

Now the way to heaven pointed out in the preceding ſermon, is the way of lowlineſs, mourning, meekneſs, and holy deſire, love of God and of our neighbour, doing good, and ſuffering

evil

evil for Christ's sake. They are therefore false prophets, who teach as the way to heaven, any other way than *this*.

5. It matters not, what they call that other way. They may call it *faith*, or *good works*: or *faith and works*: or *repentance*: or *repentance, faith and new obedience*. All these are good words. But if under these, or any other terms whatever, they teach men any way distinct from *this*, they are properly *false prophets*.

6. How much more do they fall under that condemnation, who speak evil of this good way? But above all, they who teach the directly opposite way? The way of pride, of levity, of passion, of worldly desires, of loving pleasure more than God, of unkindness to our neighbour, of unconcern for good works, and suffering no evil, no persecution for righteousness sake?

7. * If it be asked, why who ever did teach this? Or who does teach it, as the way to heaven? I answer, ten thousand wise and honourable men: even all those, of whatever denomination, who incourage the proud, the trifler, the passionate, the lover of the world, the man of pleasure, the unjust or unkind, the easy, careless, harmless, useless creature, the man who suffers no reproach for righteousness-sake, to imagine he is in the way to heaven. These are false prophets in the highest sense of the word. These are traitors both to God and man. These are no other than the first-born of Satan: the eldest sons

of

of Apollyon, the deſtroyer. Theſe are far above the rank of ordinary cut throats; for they murder the ſouls of men. They are continually peopling the realms of night: and whenever they follow the poor ſouls whom they have deſtroyed, *Hell* ſhall be *moved from beneath, to meet them at their coming.*

II. 1. But do they come now, in their own ſhape? By no means. If it were ſo, they could not deſtroy. You would take the alarm, and flee for your life. Therefore they put on a quite contrary appearance: (which was the ſecond thing to be conſidered.) *They come to you in ſheeps cloathing*, altho' *inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

2. *They come to you in ſheeps cloathing*; that is, with an appearance of harmleſſneſs. They come in the moſt mild, inoffenſive manner, without any mark or token of enmity. Who can imagine, that theſe quiet creatures, would do any hurt to any one? Perhaps they may not be ſo zealous and active in doing good, as one would wiſh they were. However, you ſee no reaſon to ſuſpect, that they have even the deſire to do any harm. But this is not all:

3. They come, ſecondly, with an appearance of uſefulneſs. Indeed to this, to do good they are particularly called. They are ſet apart for this very thing. They are particularly commiſſioned, to watch over your ſoul and to train you

up

up to eternal life. 'Tis their whole buſineſs, to *go about doing good, and healing thoſe that are oppreſſed of the devil.* And you have been always accuſtomed to look upon them in this light, as meſſengers of God, ſent to bring you a bleſſing.

4. They come, thirdly, with an appearance of religion. All they do, is for conſcience ſake! They aſſure you, it is out of mere zeal for God, that they are making God a liar. It is out of pure concern for religion, that they would deſtroy it, root and branch. All they ſpeak, is only from a love of truth, and a fear leſt it ſhould ſuffer. And, it may be, from a regard for the church, and a deſire to defend her from all her enemies.

5. Above all, they come with an appearance of love. They take all theſe pains, only for *your* good. They ſhould not trouble themſelves about you, but that they have a kindneſs for you. They will make large profeſſions of their good-will, of their concern for the danger you are in, and of their earneſt deſire, to preſerve you from error, from being intangled in new and miſchievous doctrines. They ſhould be very ſorry to ſee one who *means* ſo well, hurried into any extreme, perplext with ſtrange and unintelligible notions, or deluded into enthuſiaſm. Therefore it is, that they adviſe you, to keep ſtill, in the plain middle way: and to beware of *being righteous overmuch*, leſt you ſhould *deſtroy yourſelf.*

III. 1. But

III. 1. But how may we know, what they really are, notwithſtanding their fair appearance? This was the third thing into which it was propoſed to inquire.

Our bleſſed Lord ſaw how needful it was for all men to know *falſe prophets*, however diſguiſed. He ſaw likewiſe, how unable moſt men were, to deduce a truth thro' a long train of conſequences. He therefore gives us a ſhort and plain rule, eaſy to be underſtood by men of the meaneſt capacities, and eaſy to be applied upon all occaſions. *Ye ſhall know them by their fruits.*

2. Upon all occaſions you may eaſily apply this rule. In order to know whether any who ſpeak in the name of God, are falſe or true prophets, it is eaſy to obſerve, firſt, What are the fruits of their doctrine, as to themſelves? What effect has it had upon their lives? Are they holy and unblamable in all things? What effect has it had upon their hearts? Does it appear by the general tenor of their converſation that their tempers are holy, heavenly, divine? That the mind is in them which was in Chriſt Jeſus? That they are meek, lowly, patient lovers of God and man, and zealous of good works?

3. You may eaſily obſerve, ſecondly, What are the fruits of their doctrine, as to thoſe that hear them? In many, at leaſt, tho' not in all:

for the apoſtles themſelves did not convert all that heard them. Have theſe the mind that was in Chriſt? And do they walk as he alſo walked? And was it by hearing theſe men, that they began ſo to do? Were they inwardly and outwardly wicked, till they heard them? If ſo, it is a manifeſt proof, that thoſe are true prophets, teachers ſent of God. But if it is not ſo, if they do not effectually teach either themſelves or others to love and ſerve God; it is a manifeſt proof, that they are falſe prophets; that God hath not ſent them.

4. An hard ſaying this! How few can bear it? This our Lord was ſenſible of, and therefore condeſcends to prove it at large, by ſeveral clear and convincing arguments. *Do men*, ſays he, *ga her grapes of thorns or figs of thiſtles?* ver. 16. Do you expect that theſe evil men ſhould bring forth good fruit? As well might you expect that thorns ſhould bring forth grapes, or that figs ſhould grow upon thiſtles! *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* ver. 17. Every true prophet, every teacher whom I have ſent, bringeth forth the good fruit of holineſs. But a falſe prophet, a teacher whom I have not ſent, brings forth only ſin and wickedneſs. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.* A true prophet, a teacher ſent from God, does not bring forth good fruit, ſome-

ſometimes only, but always; not accidentally, but by a kind of neceſſity. In like manner, a falſe prophet, one whom God hath not ſent, does not bring forth evil fruit, accidentally or ſometimes only, but always and of neceſſity. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and caſt into the fire.* ver. 19. Such infallibly will be the lot of thoſe prophets, who bring not forth good fruit, who do not ſave ſouls from ſin, who do not bring ſinners to repentance. *Wherefore* let this ſtand as an eternal rule, *By their fruits ye ſhall know them.* ver. 20. They who in fact bring the proud, paſſionate, unmerciful lovers of the world, to be lowly, gentle lovers of God and man: they are true prophets, they are ſent from God, who therefore confirms their word. On the other hand, they whoſe hearers, if unrighteous before, remain unrighteous ſtill, or at leaſt, void of any righteouſneſs which *exceeds the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees:* they are falſe prophets; they are not ſent of God; therefore their word falls to the ground. And without a miracle of grace they and their hearers together, will fall into the bottomleſs pit.

5. O *beware of* theſe *falſe prophets!* For though they *come in ſheeps cloathing*, yet *inwardly they are ravening wolves.* They only deſtroy and devour the flock: they tear them in pieces, if there is none to help them. They will not, cannot

lead you in the way to heaven. How ſhould they? When they know it not themſelves. O beware they do not turn you out of the way, and cauſe you to *loſe what you have wrought.*

6. But perhaps you will aſk, If there is ſuch danger in hearing them, ought I to hear them at all? It is a weighty queſtion, ſuch as deſerves the deepeſt conſideration, and ought not to be anſwered, but upon the calmeſt thought, the moſt deliberate reflection. For many years, I have been almoſt afraid, to ſpeak at all concerning it. being unable to determine one way or the other, or to give any judgment upon it. Many reaſons there are which readily occur, and incline me to ſay, "Hear them not." And yet what our Lord ſpeaks concerning the falſe prophets of his own times, ſeems to imply the contrary. *Then ſpake Jeſus unto the multitude and to his diſciples, ſaying, the Scribes and the Phariſees ſit in* Moſes' *ſeat*, are the ordinary, ſtated teachers in your church: *all therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do. But do not ye after their works; for they ſay and do not.* Now that theſe were falſe prophets in the higheſt ſenſe, our Lord hath ſhewn during the whole courſe of his miniſtry: as indeed he does in thoſe very words, *they ſay and do not.* Therefore by their fruits his diſciples could not but know them, ſeeing they were open to the view of all men. Accordingly he warns them

again

again and again, to *beware of* theſe *falſe prophets*. And yet he does not forbid them to hear even theſe. Nay, he in effect commands them ſo to do, in thoſe words, *All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do.* For unleſs they heard them, they could not know, much leſs *obſerve whatſoever they bad them do.* Here then our Lord himſelf gives a plain direction, both to his apoſtles and the whole multitude, in ſome circumſtances, to hear even falſe prophets, known and acknowledged ſo to be.

7. But perhaps it will be ſaid, he only directed to hear them, when they read the ſcripture to the congregation. I anſwer, at the ſame time that they thus read the ſcripture, they generally expounded it too. And here is no kind of intimation, that they were to hear the one, and not the other alſo. Nay the very terms, *All things whatſoever they bid you obſerve*, exclude any ſuch limitation.

8. * Again, unto them, unto falſe prophets, undeniably ſuch, is frequently committed (O grief to ſpeak! For ſurely theſe things ought not ſo to be) the adminiſtration of the ſacrament alſo. To direct men therefore, not to hear them, would be in effect to cut them off from the ordinances of God. But this we dare not do, conſidering the validity of the ordinance doth not depend on the goodneſs of him that adminiſters, but on the faithfulneſs of him that ordained it, who will and doth meet us in his appointed ways.

Therefore on this account likewife I fcruple to fay, hear not even the falfe prophets. Even by thefe who are under a curfe themfelves, God can, and doth give us his bleffing. For the bread which they break we have experimentally known to be *the communion of the body of Chrift*. And the cup which God bleft even by their unhallowed lips, was to us the communion of the blood of Chrift.

9. * All therefore which I can fay is this: in any particular cafe, wait upon God by humble and earneft prayer, and then act according to the beft light you have. Act according to what you are perfuaded, upon the whole, will be moft for your fpiritual advantage. Take great care that you do not judge rafhly; that you do not lightly think any to be falfe prophets. And when you have full proof, fee that no anger or contempt have any place in your heart. After this, in the prefence and in the fear of God, determine for yourfelf. I can only fay, if by experience you find, that the hearing them hurts your foul, then hear them not: then quietly refrain, and hear thofe that profit you. If on the other hand, you find, it does not hurt your foul, you then may hear them ftill. Only *take heed how you hear: beware of* them and of their doctrine. Hear with fear and trembling, left *you* fhould be deceived, and given up, like them, to a ftrong delufion. As they continually mingle truth and lies, how eafily may you take in both together? Hear

Hear with fervent and continual prayer, to him who alone teacheth man wifdom. And fee that you bring whatever you hear, *to the law and to the teftimony*. Receive nothing untried, nothing till it is weighed in the balance of the fanctuary. Believe nothing they fay, unlefs it is clearly confirmed by paffages of holy writ. Wholly reject whatfoever differs therefrom, whatever is not confirmed thereby. And in particular, reject, with the utmoft abhorrence, whatfoever is defcribed as the way of falvation, that is either different from or fhort of the way, our Lord has marked out in the foregoing difcourfe.

10. I cannot conclude, without addreffing a few plain words, to thofe of whom we have now been fpeaking. O ye falfe prophets, O ye dry bones, hear ye for once the word of the Lord. How long will ye lie in the name of God? Saying God hath fpoken: and God hath not fpoken by you. How long will ye pervert the right ways of the Lord, putting darknefs for light, and light for darknefs? How long will ye teach the way of death, and call it the way of life? How long will ye deliver to Satan the fouls, whom ye profefs to bring unto God?

11. * *Wo unto you, ye blind leaders of the blind! For ye fhut the kingdom of heaven againft men. Ye neither go in yourfelves, neither fuffer ye them that are entering to go in.* Them that would ftrive to enter in at the ftrait gate, ye call back into the broad way. Them that have fcarce gone

one ſtep in the ways of God, you deviliſhly caution againſt *going too far*. Them that juſt begin to hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, you warn, not to be *righteous overmuch*. Thus you cauſe them to ſtumble at the very threſhold; yea, to fall and riſe no more. O wherefore do ye this? What profit is there in their blood, when they go down to the pit? Miſerable profit to *you*. They *ſhall periſh in their iniquity: but their blood will* God *require at* your *hands!*

12. Where are your eyes? Where is your underſtanding? Have ye deceived others, till you have deceived yourſelves alſo? Who hath required this at your hands, to *teach* a way which ye never *knew?* Are you *given up to ſo ſtrong a deluſion*, that ye not only teach but *believe a lie?* And can you poſſibly believe, that God hath ſent you? That ye are *his* meſſengers? Nay; if the Lord had ſent you, the *work of the Lord* would *proſper in your hand*. As the Lord liveth, if ye were meſſengers of God, he would *confirm the word of his meſſengers*. But the work of the Lord doth not proſper in your hand: you bring no ſinners to repentance. The Lord doth not confirm your word: for you ſave no ſouls from death.

13. How can you poſſibly evade the force of our Lord's words? So full, ſo ſtrong, ſo expreſs? How can ye evade *knowing* yourſelves *by your fruits?* Evil fruits of evil trees! And how ſhould it be otherwiſe! *Do men gather grapes of thorns*

thorns or figs of thiſtles? Take this to yourſelves, ye to whom it belongs. * O ye barren trees, why cumber ye the ground? *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.* See ye not, that here is no exception? Take knowledge then, ye are not good trees: for ye do not bring forth good fruit. *But a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* And ſo have ye done from the beginning. Your ſpeaking as from God has only confirmed them that heard you, in the tempers, if not works, of the devil. O take warning of him in whoſe name ye ſpeak, before the ſentence he hath pronounced take place. *Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and caſt into the fire.*

14. My dear brethren, harden not your hearts. You have too long ſhut your eyes againſt the light. Open them now before it is too late; before you are caſt into outer darkneſs. Let not any temporal conſideration weigh with you: for eternity is at ſtake. Ye have run before ye were ſent. O go no farther. Do not perſiſt to damn yourſelves and them that hear you! You have no fruit of your labours. And why is this? Even becauſe the Lord is not with you. But can you go this warfare at your own coſt? It cannot be. Then humble yourſelves before him. Cry unto him out of the duſt, that he may firſt quicken *thy* ſoul: give *thee* the faith that worketh by love: that is lowly and meek, pure and merciful, zealous of good works; rejoicing in tribulation, in

reproach, in diſtreſs, in perſecution for righteouſneſs ſake. So ſhall *the Spirit of glory and of Chriſt reſt upon thee*, and it ſhall appear, that God hath ſent thee. So ſhalt thou indeed *do the work of an Evangeliſt, and make full proof of thy miniſtry*. So ſhall the word of God in thy mouth be *an hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces*. It ſhall then be known by thy fruits, that thou art a prophet of the Lord, even by the children whom God hath given thee. And having *turned many to righteouſneſs, thou ſhalt ſhine as the ſtars for ever and ever!*

SERMON

SERMON XXXIII.

UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

DISCOURSE XIII.

MATT. vii. 21——27.

Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? And in thy name have caſt out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Therefore whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wiſe man, which built his houſe upon a rock.

And the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe: and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth theſe ſayings of mine and doeth them not, ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh man, which built his houſe upon the ſand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

1. OUR divine teacher having declared the whole council of God, with regard to the way of salvation, and observed the chief hindrances of those who desire to walk therein: now closes the whole with these weighty words; thereby as it were setting his seal to his prophecy, and impressing his whole authority on what he had delivered, that it might stand firm to all generations.

2. For thus saith the Lord, that none may ever conceive, there is any other way than this, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord; have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity. Therefore every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell, and great was the fall of it.*

3 I design in the following discourse, first, to consider the case of him, who thus builds his house upon the sand: secondly, To shew the

the wiſdom of him who builds upon a rock, and thirdly, To conclude with a practical application.

I. 1. And, firſt, I am to conſider the caſe of him who builds his houſe upon the ſand. It is concerning him our Lord ſaith, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And this is a decree which cannot paſs: which ſtandeth faſt for ever and ever. It therefore imports us in the higheſt degree, throughly to underſtand the force of theſe words. Now what are we to underſtand by that expreſſion, *That ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord?* It undoubtedly means, "that thinks of going to heaven by any other way than that which I have now deſcribed." It therefore implies, (to begin at the loweſt point) all good words, all verbal religion. It includes whatever creeds we may rehearſe, whatever profeſſions of faith we make: whatever number of prayers we may repeat, whatever thankſgivings we read or ſay to God. We may ſpeak good of his name; and declare his loving-kindneſs to the children of men. We may be talking of all his mighty acts, and telling of his ſalvation from day to day. By comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual, we may ſhew the meaning of the oracles of God. We may explain the myſteries of his kingdom, which have been hid from the beginning of the world. We may ſpeak with the tongue of angels rather than men, concerning the deep things

things of God. We may proclaim to ſinners, *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the ſin of the world.* Yea, we may do this with ſuch a meaſure of the power of God, and ſuch demonſtration of his Spirit, as to ſave many ſouls from death, and hide a multitude of ſins. And yet 'tis very poſſible, all this may be no more than *ſaying, Lord, Lord!* After I have thus ſucceſsfully preached to others, ſtill I myſelf may be a caſt away. I may in the hand of God, ſnatch many ſouls from hell, and yet drop into it, when I have done. I may bring many others to the kingdom of heaven, and yet myſelf never enter there. Reader, if God hath ever bleſt my word to *thy* ſoul, pray that he may be merciful to *me* a ſinner!

2. The *ſaying, Lord, Lord!* may, ſecondly, imply, the doing no harm. We may abſtain from every preſumptuous ſin, from every kind of outward wickedneſs. We may refrain from all thoſe ways of acting or ſpeaking, which are forbidden in holy writ. We may be able to ſay to all thoſe among whom we live, Which of you convinceth me of ſin? We may have a conſcience void of any external offence, towards God and towards man. We may be clear of all uncleanneſs, ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs, as to the outward act: or (as the apoſtle teſtifies concerning himſelf,) *touching the righteouſneſs of the law*, i. e. outward righteouſneſs, *blameleſs*. But yet we are not hereby juſtified. Still this is

no

no more than *ſaying, Lord, Lord!* And if we go no farther than this, we ſhall never *enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

3. The *ſaying, Lord, Lord!* may imply, thirdly, many of what are uſually ſtiled good works. A man may attend the ſupper of the Lord, may hear abundance of excellent ſermons, and omit no opportunity of partaking all the other ordinances of God. I may do good to my neighbour, deal my bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with a garment. I may be ſo zealous of good works, as even to *give all my goods to feed the poor.* Yea, and I may do all this, with a deſire to pleaſe God, and a real belief that I do pleaſe him thereby: (which is undeniably the caſe of thoſe our Lord introduces, *ſaying unto* him, *Lord, Lord!*) and ſtill I may have no part, in the glory which ſhall be revealed.

4. If any man marvels at this, let him acknowledge he is a ſtranger to the whole religion of Jeſus Chriſt: and in particular, to that perfect portraiture thereof, which he has ſet before us in this diſcourſe. For how far ſhort is all this, of that righteouſneſs and true holineſs, which he has deſcribed therein! how widely diſtant from that inward kingdom of heaven, which is now opened in the believing ſoul? Which is firſt ſown in the heart as a grain of muſtard-ſeed, but afterwards putteth forth great branches, on which grow all the fruits of righteouſneſs, every good temper and word and work.

5. Yet

5. Yet as clearly as he had declared this, as frequently as he had repeated, That none who have not this kingdom of God within them, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven: our Lord well knew, that many would not receive this ſaying, and therefore confirms it yet again: *Many*, (ſaith he; not one; not a few only; it is not a rare or an uncommon caſe) *ſhall ſay unto me in that day:* not only, we have ſaid many prayers; we have ſpoken thy praiſe; we have refrained from evil; we have exerciſed ourſelves in doing good: but what is abundantly more than this, *We have propheſied in thy name. In thy name have we caſt out devils; in thy name done many wonderful works. We have propheſied:* we have declared thy will to mankind; we have ſhewed ſinners the way to peace and glory. And we have done this, *in thy name*, according to the truth of thy goſpel. Yea, and by thy authority, who didſt confirm the word, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven. For *in* or *by thy name*, by the power of thy word and of thy Spirit, *have we caſt out devils*; out of the ſouls which they had long claimed as their own, and whereof they had full and quiet poſſeſſion. *And in thy name*, by thy power, not our own, *have we done many wonderful works:* inſomuch that even *the dead heard the voice of the Son of God* ſpeaking by us, and lived. *And then will I profeſs* even *unto them, I never knew you:* no, not then, when you were *caſting out devils in my name.* Even then I did not know you as my own:

own: for your heart was not right toward God. Ye were not yourſelves meek and lowly, ye were not lovers of God and of all mankind: ye were not renewed in the image of God. Ye were not holy as I am holy. *Depart from me, ye* who notwithſtanding all this, are *workers of iniquity*; ἀνομία. Ye are tranſgreſſors of my law, my law of holy and perfect love.

6. It is to put this beyond all poſſibility of contradiction, that our Lord confirms it by that appoſite compariſon. *Every one*, ſaith he, *who heareth theſe ſayings of mine and doth them not, ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh man, which built his houſe upon the ſand. And the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe:* as they will ſurely do, ſooner or later, upon every ſoul of man; even the floods of outward affliction, or inward temptation; the ſtorms of pride, anger, fear or deſire. *And it fell and great was the fall of it:* ſo that it periſhed for ever and ever. Such muſt be the portion of all, who reſt in any thing ſhort of that religion which is above deſcribed. And the *greater* will their *fall* be, becauſe they *heard thoſe ſayings, and* yet *did them not.*

II. 1. I am, ſecondly, to ſhew the wiſdom of him that doth them, that *buildeth his houſe upon a rock.* He indeed is wiſe, *who doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* He is truly wiſe, whoſe *righteouſneſs exceeds the righteouſneſs of the Scribes*

Scribes and Phariſees. He is poor in ſpirit; knowing himſelf even as alſo he is known. He ſees and feels all his ſin, and all his guilt, till it is waſhed away by the atoning blood. He is conſcious of his loſt eſtate, of the wrath of God abiding on him, and of his utter inability to help himſelf, till he is filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt. He is meek and gentle, patient toward all men, never *returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwiſe bleſſing*, till he overcomes evil with good. His ſoul is athirſt for nothing on earth, but only for God, the living God. He has bowels of love for all mankind, and is ready to lay down his life for his enemies. He loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind and ſoul and ſtrength. He alone ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who in this ſpirit doth good unto all men; and who being for this cauſe deſpiſed and rejected of men; being hated, reproached and perſecuted, *rejoices and is exceeding glad*, knowing in whom he hath believed; and being aſſured, theſe light, momentary afflictions will *work out for him an eternal weight and glory.*

2. * How truly wiſe is this man! He knows himſelf: an everlaſting ſpirit, which came forth from God, and was ſent down into an houſe of clay, not to do his own will, but the will of him that ſent him. He knows the world; the place in which he is to paſs a few days or years, not as an inhabitant, but a ſtranger and ſojourner, in his way

way to the everlasting habitations: and accordingly he uses the world, as not abusing it, and as knowing the fashion of it passes away. He knows God, his Father and his Friend, the parent of all good, the center of the spirits of all flesh, the sole happiness of all intelligent beings. He sees, clearer than the light of the noon-day sun, that this is the end of man, To glorify him who made him for himself, and to love and enjoy him for ever. And with equal clearness he sees the means to that end, to the enjoyment of God in glory, even now to know, to love, to imitate God, and to believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

3. He is a wise man, even in God's account; for *he buildeth his house upon a rock:* upon the rock of ages, the everlasting rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fitly is he so called; for he changeth not. He is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* To him both the man of God of old, and the apostle citing his words bear witness, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shall thou fold them up and they shall be changed: but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail.* Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. Wise therefore is the man who buildeth on him; who layeth him for his only foundation; who builds only upon his blood and righteousness, upon what he hath done

and

and ſuffered for us. On this corner-ſtone he fixes his faith, and reſts the whole weight of his ſoul upon it. He is taught of God to ſay, Lord, I have ſinned: I deſerve the nethermoſt hell. But I am *juſtified freely by thy grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt. And the life I now live, I live by faith in him, who loved me and gave himſelf for me.* *The life I now live:* namely, a divine, heavenly life; a life, which is *hid with Chriſt in God.* I now live even in the fleſh, a life of love, of pure love both to God and man: a life of holineſs and happineſs, praiſing God and doing all things to his glory.

4. Yet let not ſuch an one think, That he ſhall not ſee war any more, that he is now out of the reach of temptation. It ſtill remains, for God to prove the grace he hath given: he ſhall be tried as gold in the fire. He ſhall be tempted not leſs, than they who know not God: perhaps abundantly more. For Satan will not fail to try to the uttermoſt, thoſe whom he is not able to deſtroy. Accordingly, *the rain* will impetuouſly *deſcend:* only at ſuch times and in ſuch a manner, as ſeems good, not to the prince of the power of the air, but to him *whoſe kingdom ruleth over all. The floods*, or torrents, *will come*; they will lift up their waves and rage horribly. But to them alſo, the Lord that ſitteth above the water-floods, that remaineth a King for ever, will ſay, *Hitherto ſhall ye come and no farther: here ſhall your proud waves be ſtayed. The winds will blow and beat upon*

upon that houſe, as tho' they would tear it up from the foundation. But they cannot prevail: it falleth not: for it is founded upon a rock. He buildeth on Chriſt by faith and love: therefore he ſhall not be caſt down. He *ſhall not fear, tho' the earth be moved, and tho' the hills be carried into the mīdſt of the ſea. Tho' the waters thereof rage and ſwell, and the mountains ſhake at the tempeſt of the ſame:* ſtill he *dwelleth under the defence of the Moſt High, and is ſafe under the ſhadow of the Almighty.*

III. 1. * How nearly then does it concern every child of man, practically to apply theſe things to himſelf? Diligently to examine, on what foundation he builds, whether on a rock or on the ſand? How deeply are *you* concerned to inquire, what is the foundation of *my* hope? Whereon do I build my expectation of entring into the kingdom of heaven? Is it not built on the ſand? Upon my *orthodoxy* or right opinions, (which by a groſs abuſe of words I have called *faith!*) Upon my having a ſet of notions (ſuppoſe more rational or ſcriptural than others have.) Alas! what madneſs is this? Surely this is building on the ſand: or rather on the froth of the ſea! Say, I am convinced of this. Am I not again building my hope on what is equally unable to ſupport it? Perhaps on my belonging to "ſo excellent a church: reformed after the true ſcripture-model: bleſt with the pureſt doctrine, the

the moſt primitive liturgy, the moſt apoſtolical form of government." Theſe are doubtleſs ſo many reaſons for praiſing God, as they may be ſo many helps to holineſs. But they are not holineſs itſelf. And if they are ſeparate from it, they will profit me nothing. Nay, they will leave me nothing. Nay, they will leave me the more without excuſe, and expoſed to the greater damnation. Therefore if I build my hope upon this foundation, I am ſtill building upon the ſand.

2. You cannot, you dare not reſt here. Upon what next will you build your hope of ſalvation? Upon your innocence? Upon your doing no harm? Your not wronging or hurting any one? Well; allow this plea to be true. You are juſt in all your dealings: you are a downright honeſt man. You pay every man his own: you neither cheat, nor extort: you act fairly with all mankind. And you have a conſcience towards God: you do not live in any known ſin. Thus far is well. But ſtill it is not the thing. You may go thus far, and yet never come to heaven. When all this harmleſſneſs flows from a right principle, it is the *leaſt part* of the religion of Chriſt. But in you it does not flow from a right principle, and therefore is no part at all of religion. So that in grounding your hope of ſalvation on this, you are ſtill building upon the ſand.

3. Do you go farther yet? Do you add to the doing no harm, the attending all the ordinances

of

of God? Do you at all opportunities partake of the Lord's ſupper? Uſe public and private prayer? Faſt often? Hear and ſearch the ſcriptures, and meditate thereon? Theſe things likewiſe ought you to have done, from the time you firſt ſet your face towards heaven. Yet theſe things alſo are nothing, being alone. They are nothing without the weightier matters of the law. And thoſe you have forgotten. At leaſt you experience them not; faith, mercy, and the love of God: holineſs of heart: heaven opened in the ſoul. Still therefore you build upon the ſand.

4. * Over and above all this, are you zealous of good works? Do you, as you have time, do good to all men? Do you feed the hungry and cloath the naked, and viſit the fatherleſs and widow in their affliction? Do you viſit thoſe that are ſick? Relieve them that are in priſon? Is any a ſtranger and do you take him in? Friend, come up higher. Do you *propheſy in the name* of Chriſt? Do you preach the truth as it is in Jeſus? And does the influence of his Spirit attend your word, and make it the power of God unto ſalvation? Does he enable you to bring ſinners from darkneſs to light, from the power of Satan unto God? Then go and learn what thou haſt ſo often taught, *By grace ye are ſaved thro' faith. Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but of his own mercy he ſaveth us.* Learn to hang naked upon the croſs of Chriſt, counting all thou haſt done but dung and droſs.

Apply

Apply to him juſt in the ſpirit of the dying thief, of the harlot with her ſeven devils. Elſe thou art ſtill on the ſand, and after ſaving others, thou wilt loſe thy own ſoul.

5. * Lord! increaſe my faith, if I now believe! elſe, give me faith, tho' but as a grain of muſtard-ſeed!—But *what doth it profit, if a man ſays he hath faith, and have not works? Can* that *faith ſave him?* O no! That faith which hath not works, which doth not produce both inward and outward holineſs, which does not ſtamp the whole image of God on the heart, and purify us as he is pure: that faith which does not produce the whole of the religion deſcribed in the foregoing chapters, is not the faith of the goſpel, not the Chriſtian faith, not the faith which leads to glory. O beware of this, above all other ſnares of the devil, of reſting on unholy, unſaving faith! if thou layeſt ſtreſs on this, thou art loſt for ever: thou ſtill buildeſt thy houſe upon the ſand. When *the rain deſcends and the floods come, it* will ſurely *fall, and great* will be *the fall of it.*

6. * Now therefore, build thou upon a rock. By the grace of God, know thyſelf. Know and feel, that thou waſt ſhapen in wickedneſs, and in ſin did thy mother conceive thee: and yet thou thyſelf haſt been heaping ſin upon ſin, ever ſince thou couldſt diſcern good from evil. Own thyſelf guilty of eternal death: and renounce all hope of ever being able to ſave thyſelf. Be it all thy hope, to be waſhed in his blood, and purified by his

his Spirit, *who himſelf bore all thy ſins, in his own body upon the tree.* And if thou knoweſt he hath taken away thy ſins, ſo much the more abaſe thyſelf before him, in a continued ſenſe of thy total dependance on him for every good thought and word and work, and of thy utter inability to all good, unleſs he *water thee every moment.*

7. Now weep for your ſins, and mourn after God till he turns your heavineſs into joy. And even then weep with them that weep: and for them that weep not for themſelves. Mourn for the ſins and miſeries of mankind: and ſee, but juſt before your eyes, the immenſe ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a ſhore; which has already ſwallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain. See here the houſe of God, eternal in the heavens; there, hell and deſtruction without a covering. And thence learn the importance of every moment, which juſt appears, and is gone for ever!

8. Now add to your ſerioufneſs, meekneſs of wiſdom. Hold an even ſcale as to all your paſſions, but in particular, as to anger, ſorrow and fear. Calmly acquieſce in whatſoever is the will of God. Learn in every ſtate wherein you are, therewith to be content. Be mild to the good: be gentle toward all men; but eſpecially toward the evil and the unthankful. Beware not only of outward expreſſions of anger, ſuch as calling thy brother *Raca*, or thou fool! but of every in-

ward emotion contrary to love, tho' it go no farther than the heart. Be angry at sin, at an affront offered to the Majesty of heaven; but love the sinner still: like our Lord, who *looked round about upon* the Pharisees *with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.* He was grieved at the sinners, angry at the sin. Thus *be* thou *angry and sin not.*

9. * Now do thou hunger and thirst, not for *the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.* Trample under foot the world and the things of the world: all these riches, honours, pleasures. What is the world to thee? Let the dead bury their dead: but follow thou after the image of God. And beware of quenching that blessed thirst, if it is already excited in thy soul, by what is vulgarly called religion, a poor, dull farce, a religion of form, of outside show, which leaves the heart still cleaving to the dust, as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a religion that is spirit and life; the dwelling in God and God in thee; the being an inhabitant of eternity; the entering in by the blood of sprinkling *within the veil,* and *sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.*

10. Now, seeing thou canst do all things thro' Christ strengthening thee, be merciful as thy Father in heaven is merciful. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Love friends and enemies as thy own soul. And let thy love be *long-suffering,* and patient

patient towards all men. Let it be *kind*, ſoft, benign: inſpiring thee with the moſt amiable ſweetneſs, and the moſt fervent and tender affection. Let it *rejoice in the truth*, whereſoever it is found, the truth that is after godlineſs. Enjoy whatſoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men. In love *cover all things*; of the dead and the abſent ſpeaking nothing but good: *believe all things*, which may any way tend to clear your neighbour's character: *hope all things*, in his favour, and *endure all things*, triumphing over all oppoſition. For true *love never faileth*, in time or in eternity.

11. Now be thou *pure in heart*; purified thro' faith from every unholy affection, *cleanſing thyſelf from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfecting holineſs in the fear of God*. Being thro' the power of his grace, purified from pride by deep poverty of ſpirit, from anger, from every unkind or turbulent paſſion, by meekneſs and mercifulneſs, from every deſire but to pleaſe and enjoy God, by hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs; now love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy ſtrength.

12. In a word. Let thy religion be the religion of the heart. Let it lie deep in thy inmoſt ſoul. Be thou little and baſe, and mean and vile, (beyond what words can expreſs) in thy own eyes; amazed and humbled to the duſt, by the love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus. Be ſerious. Let the whole ſtream of thy thoughts,

words and actions flow from the deepeſt conviction, that thou ſtandeſt on the edge of the great gulph, thou and all the children of men, juſt ready to drop in, either into everlaſting glory or everlaſting burnings. Let thy ſoul be filled with mildneſs, gentleneſs, patience, long-ſuffering towards all men: at the ſame time all which is in thee is athirſt for God, the living God; longing to awake up after his likeneſs, and to be ſatisfied with it. Be thou a lover of God and of all mankind. In this Spirit do and ſuffer all things. Thus ſhew thy faith by thy works: thus *do the will of thy Father which is in heaven*. And as ſure as thou now walkeſt with God on earth, thou ſhalt alſo reign with him in glory.

SERMON

SERMON XXXIV.

THE ORIGINAL, NATURE, PROPERTY AND USE OF THE LAW.

ROM. vii. 12.

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and juſt and good.

1. PERHAPS there are few ſubjects within the whole compaſs of religion, ſo little underſtood as this. The reader of this epiſtle is uſually told, by *the law*, St. *Paul* means the *Jewiſh law:* and ſo apprehending himſelf to have no concern therewith, paſſes on without farther thought about it. Indeed ſome are not ſatisfied with this account: but obſerving the epiſtle is directed to the *Romans*, thence infer, that the apoſtle in the beginning of this chapter, alludes to the old *Roman law*. But as they have no more concern with this, than with the *ceremonial law* of *Moſes*, ſo they ſpend not much thought, on what they ſuppoſe is occaſionally mentioned, barely to illuſtrate another thing.

2. But a careful obſerver of the apoſtle's diſcourſe, will not be content with theſe ſlight explications of it. And the more he weighs the

words, the more convinced he will be that St. *Paul* by *the law* mentioned in this chapter, does not mean either the ancient law of *Rome*, or the ceremonial law of *Moſes*. This will clearly appear to all who attentively conſider the tenor of his diſcourſe. He begins the chapter, *Know ye not, brethren (for I ſpeak to them that know the law*, to them who have been inſtructed therein from their youth) *That the law hath dominion over a man, as long as he liveth?* ver. 1. (What the law of *Rome* only, or the *ceremonial* law? No ſurely; but the *moral* law) *For*, to give a plain inſtance, *the woman that hath an huſband, is bound by the* (moral) *law to her huſband as long as he liveth. But if her huſband be dead, ſhe is looſed from the law of her huſband*, ver. 2. *So then, if while her huſband liveth, ſhe be married to another man, ſhe ſhall be called an adultereſs: but if her huſband be dead, ſhe is free from that law, ſo that ſhe is no adultereſs, tho' ſhe be married to another man.* ver. 3. From this particular inſtance the apoſtle proceeds to draw that general concluſion. *Wherefore, my brethren*, by a plain parity of reaſon, *ye alſo are become dead to the law*, the whole *Moſaic* inſtitution, *by the body of Chriſt* offered for you, and bringing you under a new diſpenſation: *that ye ſhould* without any blame *be married to another, even to him who is raiſed from the dead*, and hath thereby given proof of his authority to make the change, *that ye ſhould bring forth fruit unto God.* ver. 4. And this we

can

can do now, whereas before we could not: *For when we were in the flesh*, under the power of the flesh, that is, of corrupt nature, (which was necessarily the case till we knew the power of Christ's resurrection) *the motions of sin, which were by the law*, which were shewn and inflamed by the *Mosaic* law, not conquered, *did work in our members*, broke out various ways, *to bring forth fruit unto death*. ver. 5. *But now we are delivered from the law*, from that whole moral as well as ceremonial œconomy; *that being dead whereby we were held:* that intire institution being now as it were dead, and having no more authority over us, than the husband when dead hath over his wife: *that we should serve him* who died for us and rose again; *in newness of spirit*, in a new spiritual dispensation, *and not in the oldness of the letter*, ver. 6. with a bare outward service, according to the letter of the *Mosaic* institution.

3. The apostle having gone thus far, in proving that the Christian had set aside the Jewish dispensation, and that the moral law itself, tho' it could never pass away, yet stood on a different foundation from what it did before, now stops to propose and answer an objection. *What shall we say then? Is the law sin?* So some might infer from a misapprehension of those words, *the motions of sin which were by the law. God forbid!* saith the apostle, that we should say so. Nay, the law is an irreconcileable enemy to sin; search-

ing it out wherever it is. *I had not known ſin but by the law. I had not known luſt*, evil deſire to be ſin, *except the law had ſaid, thou ſhalt not covet*, ver. 7. After opening this farther into the four following verſes, he ſubjoins this general concluſion, with regard more eſpecially to the moral law, from which the preceding inſtance was taken: *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and juſt and good.*

4. In order to explain and inforce theſe deep words, ſo little regarded, becauſe ſo little underſtood, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, firſt, the original of this law, ſecondly, the nature thereof; thirdly, the properties, that it is *holy and juſt and good*, and fourthly, the uſes of it.

I. 1. I ſhall, firſt, endeavour to ſhew the original of the moral law, often called *the law*, by way of eminence. Now this is not, as ſome may poſſibly have imagined, of ſo late an inſtitution as the time of *Moſes*. *Noah* declared it to men long before that time, and *Enoch* before him. But we may trace its original higher ſtill, even beyond the foundation of the world, to that period, unknown indeed to men, but doubtleſs inrolled in the annals of eternity, when *the morning ſtars* firſt *ſang together*, being newly called into exiſtence. * It pleaſed the great Creator to make theſe his firſt born ſons, intelligent beings, that they might know him that created them. For this end he endued them with underſtanding,

derſtanding, to diſcern truth from falſhood, good from evil: and as a neceſſary reſult of this, with liberty, a capacity of chuſing the one and refuſing the other. By this they were likewiſe enabled to offer him a free and willing ſervice: a ſervice rewardable in itſelf, as well as moſt acceptable to their gracious Maſter.

2. To employ all the faculties which he had given them, particularly their underſtanding and liberty, he gave them a law, a compleat model of all truth, ſo far as is intelligible to a finite being, and of all good, ſo far as angelic minds were capable of embracing it. It was alſo the deſign of their beneficent governor herein, to make way for a continual increaſe of their happineſs: ſeeing every inſtance of obedience to that law, would both add to the perfection of their nature, and intitle them to an higher reward, which the righteous judge would give in its ſeaſon.

3. * In like manner, when God in his appointed time, had created a new order of intelligent beings, when he had raiſed man from the duſt of the earth, breathed into him the breath of life, and cauſed him to become a living ſoul, endued with power to chuſe good or evil: he gave to this free, intelligent creature, the ſame law as to his firſt-born children: not wrote indeed upon tables of ſtone, or any corruptible ſubſtance, but engraven on his heart by the finger of God, wrote in the inmoſt ſpirit both of men and of angels: to the intent it might never

be far off, never hard to be underſtood; but always at hand, and always ſhining with clear light, even as the ſun in the midſt of heaven.

4. Such was the original of the law of God. With regard to man, it was co-eval with his nature. But with regard to the elder ſons of God, it ſhone in its full ſplendor, *or ever the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the round world were made.* But it was not long before man rebelled againſt God, and by breaking this glorious law, well nigh effaced it out of his heart; *the eyes of his underſtanding* being *darkened*, in the ſame meaſure as his ſoul was *alienated from the life of* God. And yet God did not deſpiſe the work of his own hands: but being reconciled to man thro' the Son of his love, he in ſome meaſure re-inſcribed the law, on the heart of his dark, ſinful creature. *He again ſhewed thee, O man what is good* (altho' not as in the beginning) *even to do juſtly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy* God.

5. And this he ſhewed not only to our firſt parents, but likewiſe to all their poſterity, by *that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world.* But notwithſtanding this light, all fleſh had in proceſs of time *corrupted their way before him:* till he choſe out of mankind a peculiar people, to whom he gave a more perfect knowledge of his law. And the heads

of

of this, becauſe they were ſlow of underſtanding, he wrote on two tables of ſtone; which he commanded the fathers to teach their children, thro' all ſucceeding generations.

6. And thus it is, that the law of God is now made known to them that know not God. They hear, with the hearing of the ear, the things that were written aforetime for our inſtruction. But this does not ſuffice. They cannot by this means comprehend the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. God alone can reveal this by his Spirit. And ſo he does to all that truly believe, in conſequence of that gracious promiſe, made to all the Iſrael of God: *Behold, the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the houſe of Iſrael. And this ſhall be the covenant that I will make, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their* God, *and they ſhall be my people.* Jer. xxxi. 31, *&c.*

II. 1. The nature of that law which was originally given to angels in heaven and man in paradiſe, and which God has ſo mercifully promiſed to write afreſh, in the hearts of all true believers, was the ſecond thing I propoſed to ſhew. In order to which I would firſt obſerve, that altho' *the law* and *the commandment* are ſometimes differently taken, (the commandment meaning but a part of the law) yet in the text

they are uſed as equivalent terms, implying one and the ſame thing. But we cannot underſtand here, either by one or the other, the ceremonial law. 'Tis not the ceremonial law, whereof the apoſtle ſays, in the words above recited, *I had not known ſin but by the law:* this is too plain to need a proof. Neither is it the ceremonial law which ſaith, in the words immediately ſubjoined, *Thou ſhalt not covet.* Therefore the ceremonial law, has no place in the preſent queſtion.

2. Neither can we underſtand by the law mentioned in the text, the *Moſaic* diſpenſation. 'Tis true, the word is ſometimes ſo underſtood: as when the apoſtle ſays, ſpeaking to the *Galatians*, (c. iii. v. 17.) *The covenant which was confirmed before* (namely with *Abraham* the father of the faithful) *the law*, i. e. the *Moſaic* diſpenſation, *which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot diſannul.* But it cannot be underſtood ſo in the text; for the apoſtle never beſtows, ſo high commendations as theſe upon that imperfect and ſhadowy diſpenſation. He no where affirms, the *Moſaic* to be a *ſpiritual* law: or, that it is *holy and juſt and good.* Neither is it true, that God will *write* that law *in the* hearts of them whoſe *iniquities he remembers no more.* It remains, that *the law*, eminently ſo termed, is no other than the moral law.

3. Now

3. Now this law is an incorruptible picture of the high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity. It is he whom in his eſſence no man hath ſeen or can ſee, made viſible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveiled: God manifeſted to his creatures as they are able to bear it: manifeſted to give and not to deſtroy life; that they may ſee God and live. It is the heart of God diſcloſed to man. Yea, in ſome ſenſe we may apply to this law, what the apoſtle ſays of his Son, it is ἀπάυγασμα τῆς δόξης, καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτου· *The ſtreaming forth* or out-beaming *of his glory, the expreſs image of his perſon.*

4. * "If virtue, ſaid the antient Heathen, could aſſume ſuch a ſhape as that we could behold her with our eyes, what wonderful love would ſhe excite in us!" If virtue could do this! It is done already. The law of God is all virtues in one, in ſuch a ſhape, as to be beheld with open face, by all thoſe whoſe eyes God hath enlightened. What is the law, but divine virtue and wiſdom, aſſuming a viſible form? What is it, but the original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged in the uncreated mind from eternity, now drawn forth and cloathed with ſuch a vehicle, as to appear even to human underſtanding?

5. * If we ſurvey the law of God in another point of view, it is ſupreme, unchangeable reaſon: it is unalterable rectitude: it is the everlaſting

lasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created. I am sensible, what a shortness, and even impropriety there is, in these and all other human expressions, when we endeavour by these faint pictures, to shadow out the deep things of God. Nevertheless we have no better, indeed no other way, during this our infant state of existence. As *we* now *know* but *in part*, so *we* are constrained to *prophesy*, i. e. speak of the things of God, *in part* also. *We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness*, while we are in this house of clay. While I am *a child I* must *speak as a child*. But I shall soon *put away childish things*. For *when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away*.

6. * But to return. The law of God, (speaking after the manner of men) is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature: yea it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High. It is the delight and wonder of Cherubim and Seraphim and all the company of heaven, and the glory and joy of every wise believer, every well-instructed child of God upon earth.

III. 1. Such is the nature of the ever blessed law of God. I am, in the third place, to shew the properties of it: not all; for that would exceed the wisdom of an angel. But those only which are mentioned in the text. These are

three:

three: *It is holy, juſt and good.* And firſt, *The law is holy.*

2. In this expreſſion the apoſtle does not appear to ſpeak of its effects, but rather of its nature: as St. *James* ſpeaking of the ſame thing under another name, ſays, *The wiſdom from above* (which is no other than this law, written on our heart) *is firſt pure*, chap. iii. 17. ἁγνὴ, chaſte, ſpotleſs, internally, and eſſentially holy. And conſequently, when it is tranſcribed into the life, as well as the ſoul, (it is as the ſame apoſtle terms it,) chap. i. 27. θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος. *Pure religion and undefiled*; or, the pure, clean, unpolluted worſhip of God.

3. It is indeed, in the higheſt degree, pure, chaſte, clean, holy. Otherwiſe it could not be the immediate offspring, and much leſs the expreſs reſemblance of God, who is eſſential holineſs. It is pure from all ſin, clean and unſpotted from any touch of evil. It is a chaſte virgin, incapable of any defilement, of any mixture with that which is unclean or unholy. It has no fellowſhip with ſin of any kind. For *what communion hath light with darkneſs?* As ſin is in its very nature enmity to God, ſo his law is enmity to ſin.

Therefore it is, that the apoſtle rejects with ſuch abhorrence, that blaſphemous ſuppoſition, that *the law* of God *is* either *ſin* itſelf, or the cauſe of ſin. God *forbid*, that we ſhould ſuppoſe, it is the cauſe of ſin, becauſe it is the diſcoverer

coverer of it: becauſe it detects the hidden things of darkneſs, and drags them out into open day. 'Tis true, by this means, (as the apoſtle obſerves, ver. 13.) *ſin appears to be ſin.* All its diſguiſes are torn away, and it appears in its native deformity. 'Tis true likewiſe, that *ſin by the commandment becomes exceeding ſinful.* Being now committed againſt light and knowledge, being ſtript even of the poor plea of ignorance, it loſes its excuſe as well as diſguiſe, and becomes far more odious both to God and man. Yea, and it is true, that *ſin worketh death by that which is good*, which in itſelf is pure and holy. When it is dragged out to light, it rages the more: when it is reſtrained, it burſts out with greater violence. Thus the apoſtle, (ſpeaking in the perſon of one, who was convinced of ſin, but not yet delivered from it) *ſin taking occaſion by the commandment*, detecting and endeavouring to reſtrain it, diſdained the reſtraint, and ſo much the more *wrought in me all manner of concupiſcence*, ver. 8. All manner of fooliſh and hurtful deſire, which that commandment fought to reſtrain. Thus *when the commandment came, ſin revived*, ver. 9. It freted and raged the more. But this is no ſtain on the commandment. Though it is abuſed it cannot be defiled. This only proves, that *the heart* of man *is deſperately wicked.* But *the law* of God is *holy* ſtill.

5. And

5. And it is, fecondly, *juſt*. It renders to all their due. It prefcribes exactly what is right, precifely what ought to be done, faid or thought both with regard to the author of our being, with regard to ourſelves, and with regard to every creature which he has made. It is adapted in all refpects to the nature of things, of the whole univerſe and every individual. It is fuited to all the circumſtances of each, and to all their mutual relations, whether fuch as have exiſted from the beginning, or fuch as commenced in any following period. It is exactly agreeable to the fitneſſes of things, whether eſſential or accidental. It claſhes with none of thefe in any degree; nor is ever unconnected with them. If the word be taken in that fenſe, there is nothing *arbitrary* in the law of God. Altho' ſtill the whole and every part thereof, is totally dependent upon his will: fo that *thy will be done*, is the fupreme, univerſal law both in earth and heaven.

6. " But is the will of God the cauſe of his law? Is his will the original of right and wrong? Is a thing therefore right, becauſe God wills it? Or does he will it, becauſe it is right?"

I fear, this celebrated queſtion is more curious than uſeful. And perhaps, in the manner it is uſually treated of, it does not ſo well conſiſt with the regard that is due from a creature, to the Creator and governor of all things. 'Tis hardly

decent

decent from man, to call the ſupreme God, to give an account to him! Nevertheleſs, with awe and reverence we may ſpeak a little. The Lord pardon us, if we ſpeak amiſs!

7. It ſeems then, that the whole difficulty ariſes, from conſidering God's will as diſtinct from God. Otherwiſe it vaniſhes away. For none can doubt, but God is the cauſe of the law of God. But the will of God is God himſelf. It is God conſidered as willing thus or thus. Conſequently, to ſay, That the will of God, or that God himſelf is the cauſe of the law, is one and the ſame thing.

8. * Again; if the law, the immutable rule of right and wrong, depends on the nature and fitneſſes of things, and on their eſſential relations to each other: (I do not ſay, their eternal relations; becauſe the eternal relation of things exiſting in time, is little leſs than a contradiction:) if, I ſay, this depends on the nature and relations of things, then it muſt depend on God, or the will of God: becauſe thoſe things themſelves, with all their relations, are the works of his hands. By his will, *for his pleaſure* alone, *they* all *are and were created.*

9. And yet it may be granted (which is probably all that a conſiderate perſon would contend for) that in every particular caſe, God wills this or this (ſuppoſe that men ſhould honour their parents) becauſe it is right, agreeable to the fitneſs

fitneſs of things, to the relation wherein they ſtand.

10. The law then is right and juſt concerning all things. And it is *good* as well as *juſt*. This we may eaſily infer from the fountain whence it flowed. For what was this, but the goodneſs of God? What but goodneſs alone inclined him to impart that divine copy of himſelf to the holy angels? To what elſe can we impute his beſtowing upon man the ſame tranſcript of his own nature? And what but tender love conſtrained him afreſh to manifeſt his will to fallen man? Either to *Adam*, or any of his ſeed, who like him were *come ſhort of the glory of God?* Was it not mere love that moved him to publiſh his law, after the underſtandings of men were darkened? And to ſend his prophets to declare that law, to the blind, thoughtleſs children of men? Doubtleſs his goodneſs it was which raiſed up *Enoch* and *Noah*, to be preachers of righteouſneſs; which cauſed *Abraham*, his friend, and *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, to bear witneſs to his truth. It was his goodneſs alone, which when *darkneſs* had *covered the earth, and thick darkneſs the people*, gave a written law to *Moſes*, and through him, to the nation whom he had choſen. It was his love which explained theſe living oracles by *David* and all the prophets that followed: until, when the fulneſs of time was come, he ſent his only-begotten Son, *not to deſtroy the law but to fulfil*, to confirm every jot and tittle thereof, till

till having wrote it in the hearts of all his children, and put all his enemies under his feet, *he ſhall deliver up* his mediatorial *kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.*

11. And this law which the goodneſs of God gave at firſt, and has preſerved through all ages, is, like the fountain from whence it ſprings, full of goodneſs and benignity: It is mild and kind; it is (as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it) *ſweeter than honey and the honey-comb.* It is winning and amiable. It includes *whatſoever things are lovely or of good report. If there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe* before God and his holy angels, they are all comprized in this: wherein are hid all the treaſures of the divine wiſdom and knowledge and love.

12. And it is *good* in its effects, as well as in its nature. As the tree is, ſo are its fruits. The fruits of the law of God written in the heart, are *righteouſneſs and peace and aſſurance for ever.* Or rather, the law itſelf is righteouſneſs, filling the ſoul with a peace which paſſeth all underſtanding, and cauſing us to rejoice evermore, in the teſtimony of a good conſcience toward God. It is not ſo properly a pledge, as *an earneſt of our inheritance*, being a part of the purchaſed poſſeſſion. It is God made manifeſt in our fleſh, and bringing with him eternal life: aſſuring us by that pure and perfect love, that we are *ſealed unto the day of redemption:* that he will *ſpare us as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth*

ſerveth him, in the day when he maketh up his jewels, and that there remaineth for us *a crown of glory which fadeth not away.*

IV. 1. It remains only, to ſhew, in the fourth and laſt place, the uſes of the law. And the firſt uſe of it without queſtion is, to convince the world of ſin. This is indeed the peculiar work of the Holy Ghoſt: who can work it without any means at all, or by whatever means it pleaſeth him, however inſufficient in themſelves, or even improper to produce ſuch an effect. And accordingly ſome there are whoſe hearts have been broken in pieces in a moment, either in ſickneſs or in health, without any viſible cauſe, or any outward means whatever. And others (one in an age) have been awakened to a ſenſe of the *wrath of God abiding on* them, by hearing, that *God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf.* But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God, to convict ſinners by the law. It is this, which being ſet home on the conſcience, generally breaketh the rocks in pieces. It is more eſpecially this part of *the word of God*, which *is* ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργὴς, *quick and powerful*, full of life and energy, *and ſharper than any two-edged ſword.* This in the hand of God and of thoſe whom he hath ſent, *pierces* through all the folds of a deceitful heart, and *divides aſunder even the ſoul and ſpirit*, yea, as it were, the very *joints and marrow.* By this is the

the ſinner diſcovered to himſelf. All his fig-leaves are torn away, and he ſees that he is *wretched and poor and miſerable and blind and naked.* The law flaſhes conviction on every ſide. He feels himſelf a mere ſinner. He has nothing to pay. His *mouth is ſtopt*, and he ſtands *guilty before God.*

2. To ſlay the ſinner is then the firſt uſe of the law; to deſtroy the life and ſtrength wherein he truſts, and convince him that he is dead while he liveth; not only under the ſentence of death, but actually dead unto God, void of all ſpiritual life, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.* The ſecond uſe of it is, to bring him unto life, unto Chriſt, that he may live. 'Tis true, in performing both theſe offices, it acts the part of a ſevere ſchool-maſter. It drives us by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the ſpring of all. It is the ſpirit of love, which by this painful means, tears away our confidence in the fleſh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to truſt, and ſo conſtrains the ſinner ſtript of all, to cry out in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, or groan in the depth of his heart,

" I give up every plea beſide
" Lord, I am damn'd—but thou haſt died."

3. The third uſe of the law is, to keep us alive. It is the grand means whereby the bleſſed Spirit

Spirit prepares the believer for larger communications of the life of God.

I am afraid this great and important truth is little underſtood, not only by the world, but even by many whom God hath taken out of the world, who are real children of God by faith. Many of theſe lay it down as an unqueſtioned truth, that when we come to Chriſt, we have done with the law; and that in *this* ſenſe, *Chriſt is the end of the law, to every one that believeth. The end of the law.* So he is, *for righteouſneſs*, for juſtification *to every one that believeth.* Herein the law is at an end. It juſtifies none; but only brings them to Chriſt. Who is alſo in another reſpect, *the end* or ſcope *of the* law, the point at which it continually aims. But when it has brought us to him, it has yet a farther office, namely, to keep us with him. For it is continually exciting all believers, the more they ſee of its height and depth and length and breadth, to exhort one another ſo much the more,

" Cloſer and cloſer let us cleave
To his belov'd embrace:
Expect his fulneſs to receive,
And grace to anſwer grace."

4. * Allowing then that every believer has done with the law, as it means the *Jewiſh* ceremonial law, or the entire *Moſaic* diſpenſation (for

(for these *Christ hath taken out of the way*) yea, allowing we have done with the moral law, as a means of procuring our justification (for we are *justified freely by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus*). Yet in another sense, we have not done with this law. For it is still of unspeakable use, first, in convincing us of the sin that yet remains both in our hearts and lives, and thereby keeping us close to Christ, that his blood may cleanse us every moment; secondly, in deriving strength from our head into his living members, whereby he impowers them to do what his law commands; and thirdly, in confirming our hope of whatsoever it commands, and we have not yet attained, of receiving grace upon grace, till we are in actual possession of the fulness of his promises.

5. How clearly does this agree with the experience of every true believer! While he cries out, *O what love have I unto thy law! All the day long is my study in it*; he sees daily in that divine mirror, more and more of his own sinfulness. He sees more and more clearly, that he is still a sinner in all things; that neither his heart nor his ways are right before God. And that every moment sends him to Christ. This shews him the meaning of what is written, *Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, Holiness to the Lord. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead* (the type of our great high-priest)

prieſt) *that Aaron may bear the iniquities of the holy things, which the children of Iſrael ſhall hollow, in all their holy gifts:* (ſo far are our prayers or holy things from atoning for the reſt of our ſin!) *And it ſhall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.* Exod. xxviii. 36, 38.

6. To explain this by a ſingle inſtance. The law ſays, *Thou ſhalt not kill*, and hereby (as our Lord teaches) forbids not only outward acts, but every unkind word or thought. Now the more I look into this perfect law, the more I feel how far I come ſhort of it: and the more I feel this, the more I feel my need of his blood to atone for all my ſin: and of his Spirit to purify my heart, and make me *perfect and entire, lacking nothing.*

7. * Therefore I cannot ſpare the law one moment, no more than I can ſpare Chriſt: Seeing I now want it as much, to keep me to Chriſt, as I ever wanted it to bring me to him. Otherwiſe, this *evil heart of unbelief* would immediately *depart from the living* God. Indeed each is continually ſending me to the other, the law to Chriſt, and Chriſt to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law conſtrain me to fly to the love of God in Chriſt. On the other, the love of God in Chriſt, endears the law to me *above gold or precious ſtones:* ſeeing I know every part of it, is a

gracious promiſe, which my Lord will fulfil in its ſeaſon.

8. * Who art thou then, O man, that *judgeſt the law, and ſpeakeſt evil of the law?* That rankeſt it with ſin, Satan and death, and ſendeſt them all to hell together! The apoſtle *James* eſteemed *judging* or *ſpeaking evil of the law*, ſo enormous a piece of wickedneſs, that he knew not how to aggravate the guilt of judging our brethren, more than by ſhewing it included this. *So now*, ſays he, *thou art not a doer of the law but a judge!* A judge of that which God hath ordained to judge thee. So thou haſt ſet up thyſelf in the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, and caſt down the rule whereby he will judge the world! O take knowledge what advantage Satan hath gained over thee; and for the time to come never think or ſpeak lightly of, much leſs dreſs up as a ſcare-crow this bleſſed inſtrument of the grace of God. Yea, love and value it for the ſake of him from whom it came, and of him to whom it leads. Let it be thy glory and joy, next to the croſs of Chriſt. Declare its praiſe, and make it honourable before all men.

2. And if thou art throughly convinced, That it is the offſpring of God, that it is the copy of all his imitable perfections, and that it is *holy and juſt and good*, but eſpecially to them that believe: then inſtead of caſting it away as a polluted thing, ſee that thou cleave to it more and more. Never let the law of mercy and truth,

of

of love to God and man, of lowlineſs, meekneſs and purity forſake thee. *Bind it about thy neck: write it on the table of thy heart.* Keep cloſe to the law, if thou wilt keep cloſe to Chriſt: hold it faſt: let it not go. Let this continually lead thee to the atoning blood, continually confirm thy hope, till all *the righteouſneſs of the law is fulfilled in* thee, and thou art *filled with all the fulneſs of* God.

10. And if thy Lord hath already fulfilled his word, if he hath already *written his law in thy heart*, then *ſtand faſt in the liberty, wherewith Chriſt hath made thee free.* Thou art not only made free from *Jewiſh* ceremonies, from the guilt of ſin and the fear of hell: (theſe are ſo far from being the whole, that they are the leaſt and loweſt part, of Chriſtian liberty:) but what is infinitely more, from the power of ſin, from ſerving the devil, from offending God. O ſtand faſt in this liberty, in compariſon of which, all the reſt is not even worthy to be named. Stand faſt in loving God with all thy heart, and ſerving him with all thy ſtrength. This is perfect freedom; thus to keep his law, and to walk in all his commandments blameleſs. *Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* I do not mean of *Jewiſh* bondage: nor yet of bondage to the fear of hell: theſe, I truſt, are far from thee. But beware of being intangled again with the yoke of ſin, of any inward or outward tranſgreſſion of the law. Abhor ſin far more

than death or hell; abhor ſin itſelf, far more than the puniſhment of it. Beware of the bondage of pride, of deſire, of anger; of every evil temper or word or work. *Look unto Jeſus*, and in order thereto, *look* more and more *into the perfect law, the law of liberty*. And *continue therein*: ſo ſhalt thou daily *grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*.

SERMON

SERMON XXXV.

THE LAW ESTABLISHED THRO' FAITH.

DISCOURSE I.

ROM. iii. 31.

Do we then make void the law thro' Faith? God forbid. Yea, we eſtabliſh the law.

1. SAINT *Paul* having in the beginning of this epiſtle, laid down his general propoſition, namely, That *the goſpel of Chriſt is the power of God unto ſalvation, to every one that believeth:* the powerful means, whereby God makes every believer a partaker of preſent and eternal ſalvation, goes on to ſhew, that there is no other way under heaven, whereby men can be ſaved. He ſpeaks particularly of ſalvation from the guilt of ſin, which he commonly terms juſtification. And that all men ſtood in need of this, that none could plead their own innocence, he proves at large by various arguments, addreſt to the Jews as well as the Heathens. Hence he infers (in the 19th verſe of this chapter) *That every mouth*, whether of Jew or Heathen, muſt

be ſtopt from excuſing or juſtifying himſelf, *and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore*, ſaith he, by his own obedience, *by the works of the law, ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight*, ver. 20. *But now the righteouſneſs of God without the law*, without our previous obedience thereto, *is manifeſted*, ver. 21. *Even the righteouſneſs of God, which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt, unto all and upon all that believe*, ver. 22. *For there is no difference*, as to their need of juſtification, or the manner wherein they attain it. *For all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God*, (ver. 23.) he glorious image of God wherein they were created: and all (who attain) *are juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt:* ver. 24. *Whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, thro' faith in his blood*—ver. 25. *That he might be juſt, and yet the juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus*; ver. 36. that without any impeachment to his juſtice, he might ſhew him mercy, for the ſake of that propitiation. *Therefore we conclude*, (which was the grand poſition he had undertaken to eſtabliſh) *That a man is juſtified by faith, without the works of the law*, ver. 28.

2. It was eaſy to foreſee an objection which might be made, and which has in fact been made in all ages: namely, That to ſay *we are juſtified without the works of the law*, is to aboliſh the law. The apoſtle, without entering into a formal diſpute, ſimply denies the charge. *Do we then*,

ſays

ſays he, *make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we eſtabliſh the law.*

3. The ſtrange imagination of ſome, that St. *Paul*, when he ſays, *A man is juſtified without the works of the law*, means only the *ceremonial* law, is abundantly confuted by theſe very words. For did St. *Paul eſtabliſh* the *ceremonial* law? It is evident, he did not. He did *make void* that law through faith, and openly avowed his doing ſo. It was the *moral* law only of which he might truly ſay, We do not make void but *eſtabliſh* this *through faith.*

4. But all men are not herein of his mind. Many there are who will not agree to this. Many in all ages of the church, even among thoſe who bore the name of Chriſtians, have contended, That *the faith once delivered to the ſaints*, was deſigned to make void the whole law. They would no more ſpare the moral than the ceremonial law, but were for *hewing*, as it were, *both in pieces before the Lord:* vehemently maintaining, "If you eſtabliſh any law, *Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing: Chriſt is become of no effect to you: ye are fallen from grace.*"

5. But is the zeal of theſe men according to knowledge? Have they obſerved the connection between the law and faith? And that conſidering that cloſe connection between them, to deſtroy one is indeed to deſtroy both? That to aboliſh the moral law is in truth, to aboliſh faith and the law together? As leaving no proper

means, either of bringing us to faith, or of *ſtirring up that gift of God* in our ſoul.

6. It therefore behoves all who deſire either to come to Chriſt, or to *walk in Him whom they have received*, to take heed how they *make void the law through faith*; to ſecure us effectually againſt which, let us enquire, firſt, which are the moſt uſual ways of *making void the law through faith*, and ſecondly, How we may follow the apoſtle, and by faith *eſtabliſh the law*.

I. 1. Let us, firſt, inquire, Which are the moſt uſual ways of *making void the law through faith*. Now the way for a preacher to make it all void at a ſtroke, is, Not to preach it at all. This is juſt the ſame thing, as to blot it out of the oracles of God. More eſpecially when it is done with deſign; when it is made a rule, "Not to preach the law:" and the very phraſe, "A preacher of the law," is uſed as a term of reproach, as tho' it meant little leſs than, "an enemy to the goſpel."

2. All this proceeds from the deepeſt ignorance of the nature, properties and uſe of the law: and proves that thoſe who act thus, either know not Chriſt, are utter ſtrangers to living faith: or at leaſt, that they are but babes in Chriſt, and as ſuch *unſkilled in the word of righteouſneſs*.

3. Their grand plea is this: "That preaching the goſpel (that is, according to their judgment, the ſpeaking of nothing but the ſufferings and merits of Chriſt) anſwers all the ends of the law."

But

But this we utterly deny. It does not anſwer the very firſt end of the law, namely, The convincing men of ſin, the awakening thoſe who are ſtill aſleep on the brink of hell. There may have been here and there an exempt caſe. One in a thouſand may have been awakened by the goſpel. But this is no general rule. The ordinary method of God, is to convict ſinners by the law, and that only. The goſpel is not the means which God hath ordained, or which our Lord himſelf uſed, for this end. We have no authority in ſcripture for applying it thus, nor any ground to think it will prove effectual. Nor have we any more ground to expect this, from the nature of the thing. *They that be whole*, as our Lord himſelf obſerves, *need not a phyſician, but they that be ſick*. It is abſurd therefore to offer a phyſician to them that are whole, or that at leaſt imagine themſelves ſo to be. You are firſt, to convince them, that they are ſick. Otherwiſe they will not thank you for your labour. It is equally abſurd to offer Chriſt to them, whoſe heart is whole, having never yet been broken. It is in the proper ſenſe, *caſting pearls before ſwine*. Doubtleſs, *they will trample them under foot*. And it is no more than you have reaſon to expect, if they alſo *turn again and rent you*.

4. "But altho' there is no command in ſcripture, to offer Chriſt to the careleſs ſinner, yet are there not ſcriptural precedents for it?" I think

not: I know not any. I believe you can't produce one, either from the four Evangeliſts, or the *Acts of the Apoſtles*. Neither can you prove this to have been the practice of any of the apoſtles, from any paſſage in all their writings.

5. "Nay, does not the apoſtle *Paul* ſay, in his former Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, *We preach Chriſt crucified?* ch. i. ver. 23. And in his latter, *We preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord?* ch. v. ver. 4."

We conſent to reſt the cauſe on this iſſue: to tread in his ſteps, to follow his example. Only preach you, juſt as *Paul* preached, and the diſpute is at an end.

For altho' we are certain he *preached Chriſt*, in as perfect a manner as the very chief of the apoſtles, yet who *preached the law* more than St. *Paul?* Therefore he did not think the goſpel anſwered the ſame end.

6. The very firſt ſermon of St. *Paul*'s, which is recorded, concludes in theſe words. *By him all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes. Beware therefore leſt that come upon you which is ſpoken of in the Prophets, Behold ye deſpiſers and wonder and periſh. For I work a work in your days, a work which you will in no wiſe believe, tho' a man declare it unto you*, Acts xiii. 39, &c. Now it is manifeſt, all this is *preaching the law*, in the ſenſe wherein you underſtand the term: even altho' great part of, if not all his hearers, were

were either *Jews or religious proſelytes*, ver. 43. and therefore probably many of them, in ſome degree at leaſt, convinced of ſin already. He firſt reminds them, That they could not be juſtified by the law of *Moſes*, but only by faith in Chriſt: and then ſeverely threatens them with the judgments of God, which is in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe *preaching the law*.

7. In his next diſcourſe, that to the Heathens at *Lyſtra*, (ch. xiv. ver. 15, &c.) we do not find ſo much as the name of Chriſt. The whole purport of it is, That they ſhould *turn from thoſe vain idols, unto the living God*. Now confeſs the truth. Do not you think, If you had been there, you could have preached much better than he? I ſhould not wonder, if you thought too, That his *preaching ſo ill*, occaſioned his being *ſo ill treated:* and that his being *ſtoned*, was a juſt judgment upon him, for not *preaching Chriſt!*

8. To the jailor indeed, when *he ſprang in and came trembling, and fell down before* Paul *and* Silas, *and ſaid, Sirs; What muſt I do to be ſaved*, he immediately ſaid, *Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* (ch. xvi. ver. 29, &c.) And in the caſe of one ſo deeply convinced of ſin, who would not have ſaid the ſame? But to the men of *Athens* you find him ſpeaking in a quite different manner, reproving their ſuperſtition, ignorance and idolatry; and ſtrongly moving them to repent, from the conſideration of a future judgment, and of the reſurrection from the dead, (ch. xvii. ver. 24.—31.)

Likewiſe *when* Felix *ſent for* Paul, on purpoſe that he might *hear him concerning the faith in Chriſt*; inſtead of preaching Chriſt in *your* ſenſe (which would probably have cauſed the governor either to mock, or to contradict and blaſpheme) *he reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance and judgment to come*, till *Felix* (hardened as he was) *trembled*. (ch. xxiv. ver. 24, 25.) Go thou and tread in his ſteps. *Preach* Chriſt to the careleſs ſinner, by *reaſoning of righteouſneſs, temperance and judgment to come!*

9. If you ſay, "But he *preached Chriſt* in a different manner in his epiſtles;" I anſwer, He did not there preach at all: not in that ſenſe wherein we ſpeak: for *preaching* in our preſent queſtion, means, ſpeaking before a congregation. But waving this, I anſwer, 2. His epiſtles are directed, not to unbelievers, ſuch as thoſe we are now ſpeaking of, but *to the ſaints of God in Rome, Corinth, Philippi* and other places. Now unqueſtionably he would ſpeak more of Chriſt to theſe, than to thoſe who were without God in the world. And yet, 3. Every one of theſe is full of the law, even the epiſtles to the *Romans* and the *Galatians:* in both of which he does what you term preaching the law, and that to believers as well as unbelievers.

10. From hence 'tis plain, you know not what it is, to *preach Chriſt*, in the ſenſe of the apoſtle. For doubtleſs St. *Paul* judged himſelf to be *preaching Chriſt*, both to *Felix*, and at *Antioch, Lyſtra*, and

and *Athens*. From whose example every thinking man must infer, That not only the declaring the love of Christ to sinners, but also the declaring that he will come from heaven in flaming fire, is, in the apostle's sense, *preaching Christ:* yea, in the full scriptural meaning of the word. To *preach Christ*, is, to preach what he hath revealed, either in the old or new Testament: so that you are then as really preaching Christ, when you are saying, *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God*, as when you are saying, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!*

10. Consider this well: that to *preach Christ*, is to preach all things that Christ hath spoken; all his promises, all his threatnings and commands; all that is written in his book. And then you will know how to preach Christ, without making void the law.

11. "But does not the greatest blessing attend those discourses, wherein we peculiarly preach the merits and sufferings of Christ?"

Probably, when we preach to a congregation of mourners or of believers, these will be attended with the greatest blessing: because such discourses are peculiarly suited to their state. At least, these will usually convey the most comfort. But this is not always the greatest blessing. I may sometimes receive a far greater, by a discourse that cuts me to the heart and humbles me to the dust. Neither should I receive that comfort,

fort, if I were to preach or to hear no diſcourſes but on the ſufferings of Chriſt. Theſe by conſtant repetition would loſe their force and grow more and more flat and dead: 'till at length they would become a dull round of words, without any ſpirit or life or virtue. So that thus *to preach Chriſt*, muſt in proceſs of time, make void the goſpel as well as the law.

II. 1. A ſecond way of *making void the law thro' faith*, is, the teaching that faith ſuperſedes the neceſſity of holineſs. This divides itſelf into a thouſand ſmaller paths: and many there are that walk therein. Indeed there are few that wholly eſcape it: few who are convinced, we *are ſaved by faith*, but are ſooner or later, more or leſs, drawn aſide into this by-way.

2.* All thoſe are drawn into this by-way, who if it be not their ſettled judgment, that faith in Chriſt intirely ſets aſide the neceſſity of keeping his law, yet ſuppoſe either, 1. That holineſs is leſs neceſſary now than it was before Chriſt: or, 2. That a leſs degree of it is neceſſary; or, 3. That it is leſs neceſſary to believers than to others. Yea, and ſo are all thoſe, who altho' their judgment be right in the general, yet think they may take more liberty in particular caſes, than they could have done before they believed. Indeed the uſing the term *liberty*, in ſuch a manner, for "Liberty from obedience or holineſs," ſhews at once, that their judgment is perverted, and

and that they are guilty of what they imagined to be far from them, namely of *making void the law thro' faith*, by ſuppoſing faith to ſuperſede holineſs.

3. The firſt plea of thoſe who teach this expreſly, is, that " we are now under the covenant of grace, not works: and therefore we are no longer under the neceſſity of performing the works of the law."

And whoever was under the covenant of works? None but *Adam* before the fall. He was fully and properly under that covenant, which required perfect, univerſal obedience, as the one condition of acceptance; and left no place for pardon, upon the very leaſt tranſgreſſion. But no man elſe was ever under this, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither before Chriſt nor ſince. All his ſons were and are under the covenant of grace; the manner of their acceptance is this: the free grace of God thro' the merits of Chriſt, gives pardon to them that believe, that believe with ſuch a faith as working by love, produces all obedience and holineſs.

4. The caſe is not therefore as you ſuppoſe, that men were *once* more obliged to obey God, or to work the works of his law than they are *now*. This is a ſuppoſition you cannot make good. But, we ſhould have been obliged, if we had been under the covenant of works, to have done thoſe works antecedent to our acceptance. Whereas now all good works, tho' as neceſſary

as

as ever, are not antecedent to our acceptance but conſequent upon it. Therefore the nature of the covenant of grace, gives you no ground, no encouragement at all, to ſet aſide any inſtance or degree of obedience, any part or meaſure of holineſs.

5. "But are we not *juſtified by faith, without the works of the law?*" Undoubtedly we are, without the works either of the ceremonial or the moral law. And would to God all men were convinced of this. It would prevent innumerable evils. Antinomianiſm, in particular; for generally ſpeaking, they are the Phariſees who make the Antinomians. Running into an extreme ſo palpably contrary to ſcripture, they occaſion others to run into the oppoſite one. Theſe ſeeking to be juſtified by works, affright thoſe from allowing any place for them.

6. * But the truth lies between both. We are doubtleſs *juſtified by faith*. This is the corner-ſtone of the whole Chriſtian building. We are *juſtified without the works of the law*, as any previous condition of juſtification. But they are an immediate fruit of that faith, whereby we are juſtified. So that if good works do not follow our faith, even all inward and outward holineſs, it is plain our faith is nothing worth: we are yet in our ſins. Therefore, that *we are juſtified by faith*, even by *faith without works*, is no ground for *making void the law thro' faith*: or

for

for imagining that faith is a diſpenſation, from any kind or degree of holineſs.

7. " Nay, but does not St. *Paul* expreſſly ſay, *Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs?* And does it not follow from hence, That faith is to a believer in the room, in the place of righteouſneſs? But if faith is in the room of righteouſneſs or holineſs, what need is there of this too?"

This, it muſt be acknowledged, comes home to the point, and is indeed the main pillar of Antinomianiſm. And yet it needs not a long or laboured anſwer. We allow, 1. That God *juſtifies the ungodly*, him that till that hour is totally ungodly, full of all evil, void of all good. 2. That he juſtifies *the ungodly that worketh not*, that till that moment worketh no good work: neither can he: for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. 3. That he juſtifies him *by faith alone*, without any goodneſs or righteouſneſs preceding: and, 4. * That *faith is* then *counted to him for righteouſneſs*, namely, for *preceding righteouſneſs: i. e.* God, thro' the merits of Chriſt, accepts him that believes, as if he had already fulfilled all righteouſneſs. But what is all this to your point? The apoſtle does not ſay, either here or elſewhere, that this faith is counted to him for *ſubſequent righteouſneſs*. He does teach, that there is no righteouſneſs *before* faith. But where does he teach, that there is none *after*

ter it? He does assert, holiness cannot *precede* justification: but not, that it need not *follow* it. St. *Paul* therefore gives you no colour for *making void the law*, by teaching that faith supersedes the necessity of holiness.

III. 1. There is yet another way of *making void the law thro' faith*, which is more common than either of the former. And that is, the doing it practically: the making it void in *fact*, tho' not in *principle*: the *living*, as if faith was designed to excuse us from holiness.

How earnestly does the Apostle guard us against this; in those well known words: *What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?* God *forbid! Rom.* vi. 15. A caution which it is needful throughly to consider, because it is of the last importance.

2. The being *under the law* may here mean, 1. The being obliged to observe the ceremonial law. 2. The being obliged to conform to the whole *Mosaic* institution. 3. The being obliged to keep the whole moral law, as the condition of our acceptance with God: and, 4. The being under the wrath and curse of God, under sentence of eternal death; under a sense of guilt and condemnation, full of horror and slavish fear.

3. Now altho' a believer is *not without law to* God, *but under the law to Christ*, yet from the moment he believes, he is not *under the law*, in

any

any of the preceding ſenſes. On the contrary, he is *under grace*, under a more benign, gracious diſpenſation. As he is no longer under the ceremonial law, nor under the *Moſaic* inſtitution; as he is not obliged to keep even the moral law, as the condition of his acceptance: ſo he is delivered from the wrath and the curſe of God, from all ſenſe of guilt and condemnation, and from all that horror and fear of death and hell, whereby he was *all his life* before *ſubject to bondage*. And he now performs (which while *under the law* he could not do) a willing and univerſal obedience. He obeys not from the motive of ſlaviſh fear, but on a nobler principle, namely, The grace of God ruling in his heart, and cauſing all his works to be wrought in love.

4. What then? Shall this evangelical principle of action, be leſs powerful than the legal? Shall we be leſs obedient to God from filial love, than we were from ſervile fear?

'Tis well, if this is not a common caſe: if this practical Antinomianiſm, this unobſerved way of *making void the law thro' faith*, has not infected thouſands of believers.

* Has it not infected you? Examine yourſelf honeſtly and cloſely. Do you not do now, what you durſt not have done when you was *under the law*, or (as we commonly call it) *under conviction?* For inſtance. You durſt not then indulge yourſelf in food. You took juſt what was needful, and that of the cheapeſt kind. Do you not allow

allow yourself more latitude now? Do you not indulge yourself a *little* more than you did? O beware, lest you *sin, because you are not under the law, but under grace!*

5. * When you was under conviction, you durst not indulge the lust of the eye in any degree. You would not do any thing, great or small, merely to gratify your curiosity. You regarded only cleanliness and necessity, or at most very moderate convenience, either in furniture or apparel; superfluity and finery of whatever kind, as well as fashionable elegance, were both a terror and an abomination to you.

* Are they so still? Is your conscience as tender now in these things, as it was then? Do you still follow the same rule both in furniture and apparel, trampling all finery, all superfluity, every thing useless, every thing merely ornamental; however fashionable, under foot? Rather, have you not resumed what you had once laid aside, and what you could not then use without wounding your conscience? And have you not learned to say, "O, I am not *so scrupulous* now." I would to God you were! Then you would not *sin* thus, *because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

6. * You was once scrupulous too of commending any to their face, and still more, of suffering any to commend *you*. It was a stab to your heart: you could not bear it: you sought the honour that cometh of God only. You could not

not endure such conversation: nor any conversation which was not good, to the use of edifying. All idle talk, all trifling discourse you abhorred: you hated as well as feared it, being deeply sensible of the value of time, of every precious, fleeting moment. In like manner, you dreaded and abhorred idle expence; valuing your money only less than your time, and trembling lest you should be found an unfaithful steward even of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Do you now look upon praise as deadly poison, which you can neither give nor receive but at the peril of your soul? Do you still dread and abhor all conversation, which does not tend to the use of edifying; and labour to improve every moment, that it may not pass without leaving you better than it found you? Are not you less careful as to the expence both of money and time? Cannot you now lay out either, as you could not have done once? Alas! How has *which should have been for your health, proved to you an occasion of falling?* How have you *sinned, because you was not under the law, but under grace!*

7. * God forbid you should any longer continue thus to *turn the grace of* God *into lasciviousness!* O remember, how clear and strong a conviction you once had, concerning all these things. And at the same time you was fully satisfied, from whom that conviction came. The world told you, you was in a delusion: but you knew, It was the voice of God. In these things you was

not

not *too ſcrupulous* then; but you are not now *ſcrupulous enough*. God kept you longer in that painful ſchool, that you might learn thoſe great leſſons the more perfectly. And have you forgot them already? O recollect them, before it is too late. Have you ſuffered ſo many things in vain? I truſt, it is not yet in vain. Now uſe the conviction without the pain: practiſe the leſſon without the rod. Let not the mercy of God weigh leſs with you now, than his fiery indignation did before. Is love a leſs powerful motive than fear? If not, let it be an invariable rule "I will do nothing now I am *under grace*, which I durſt not have done when *under the law*."

8. * I cannot conclude this head, without exhorting you to examine yourſelf likewiſe touching ſins of omiſſion. Are you as clear of theſe, now *you are under grace*, as you was when *under the law?* How diligent was you then in hearing the word of God? Did you neglect any opportunity? Did you not attend thereon day and night? Would a ſmall hindrance have kept you away? A little buſineſs? A viſitant? A ſlight indiſpoſition? A ſoft bed? A dark or cold morning? — Did you not then faſt often? Or uſe abſtinence to the uttermoſt of your power? Was not you much in prayer, (cold and heavy as you was) while you was hanging over the mouth of hell? Did you not ſpeak and not ſpare, even for an unknown God? Did you not boldly plead his cauſe? Reprove ſinners? And avow the truth,

before

before an adulterous generation?—And are you now a believer in Chriſt? Have you the *faith that overcometh the world?* What! and are leſs zealous for your Maſter now, than you was when you knew him not? Leſs diligent in faſting, in prayer, in hearing his word, in calling ſinners to God? O repent. See and feel your grievous loſs! Remember from whence you are fallen! Bewail your unfaithfulneſs! Now be zealous and do the firſt works; leſt if you continue to *make void the law through faith*, God cut you off, and *appoint* you your *portion with the unbelievers!*

SERMON

SERMON XXXVI.

THE LAW ESTABLISHED THRO' FAITH.

DISCOURSE II.

ROM. iii. 31.

Do we then make void the law thro' faith? God forbid! Yea, we eſtabliſh the law.

1. IT has been ſhewn in the preceding diſcourſe, which are the moſt uſual ways of *making void the law thro' faith:* namely, firſt, The not preaching it at all, which effectually makes it all void at a ſtroke: and this under colour of *preaching Chriſt* and magnifying the goſpel, tho' it be in truth, deſtroying both the one and the other: ſecondly, The teaching (whether directly or indirectly) that faith ſuperſedes the neceſſity of holineſs: that this is leſs neceſſary now, or a leſs degree of it neceſſary, than before Chriſt came: that it is leſs neceſſary to us, becauſe we believe, than otherwiſe it would have been: or, that Chriſtian liberty is a liberty from any kind or degree of holineſs: (ſo perverting thoſe great truths, that we are now under the *covenant*

venant of grace and not *of works:* that *a man is juſtified by faith, without the works of the law*; and that *to him that worketh not but believeth, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs:)* or, thirdly, The doing this practically; the making void the law in practice tho' not in principle: the living or acting, as if faith was deſigned to excuſe us from holineſs: the allowing ourſelves in ſin, *becauſe we are not under the law, but under grace.* It remains to enquire, how we may follow a better pattern, how we may be able to ſay with the apoſtle, *Do we then make void the law thro' faith? God forbid! Yea, we eſtabliſh the law.*

2. We do not indeed eſtabliſh the old ceremonial law: we know that is aboliſhed for ever. Much leſs do we eſtabliſh the whole *Moſaic* diſpenſation. This, we know, our Lord has *nailed to his croſs.* Nor yet do we ſo eſtabliſh the moral law (which it is to be feared, too many do) as if the fulfilling it, the keeping all the commandments, were the condition of our juſtification. If it were ſo, ſurely *in his ſight, ſhould no man living be juſtified.* But all this being allowed, we ſtill in the apoſtle's ſenſe, *eſtabliſh the law*, the moral law.

I. 1. We *eſtabliſh the law*, firſt, By our doctrine: by endeavouring to preach it in its whole extent, to explain and inforce every part of it, in the ſame manner as our great Teacher did, while upon earth. We eſtabliſh it, by following

St. *Peter*'s advice, *If any man ſpeak let him ſpeak as the oracles of God*; as the holy men of old moved by the Holy Ghoſt, ſpoke and wrote for our inſtruction, and as the apoſtles of our bleſſed Lord, by the direction of the ſame ſpirit. We eſtabliſh it whenever we ſpeak in his name, by keeping back nothing from them that hear; by declaring to them, without any limitation or reſerve, the whole counſel of God. And in order the more effectually to eſtabliſh it, we uſe herein great plainneſs of ſpeech. *We are not as many that corrupt the word of God*, καπηλεύοντες (as artful men their bad wines) we do not cauponize, mix, adulterate or ſoften it, to make it ſuit the taſte of the hearers. *But as of ſincerity, but as of God in the ſight of God, ſpeak we in Chriſt:* as having no other aim, than *by manifeſtation of the truth*, to *commend ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God.*

2. We then by our doctrine eſtabliſh the law, when we thus openly declare it to all men: and that, in the fulneſs wherein it is delivered by our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles: when we publiſh it in the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. We then eſtabliſh the law, when we declare every part of it, every commandment contained therein, not only in its full literal ſenſe, but likewiſe in its ſpiritual meaning: not only with regard to the outward actions, which it either forbids or enjoins: but alſo with reſpect to the

the inward principle, to the thoughts, desires and intents of the heart.

3. And indeed this we do the more diligently, not only because it is of the deepest importance; inasmuch as all the fruit, every word and work, must be only evil continually, if the tree be evil, if the dispositions and tempers of the heart, be not right before God: but likewise, because as important as these things are, they are little considered or understood. So little, that we may truly say of the law too, when taken in its full spiritual meaning, It is *a mystery which was hid from ages and generations since the world began.* It was utterly hid from the Heathen world. They, with all their boasted wisdom, neither *found out God*, nor the law of God, not in the letter, much less in the spirit of it. *Their foolish hearts were* more and more *darkened*, while *professing themselves wise, they became fools.* And it was almost equally hid, as to its spiritual meaning, from the bulk of the Jewish nation. Even these who were so ready to declare concerning others, *this people that know not the law, is accursed*, pronounced their own sentence therein, as being under the same curse, the same dreadful ignorance. Witness our Lord's continual reproof of the wisest among them, for their gross misinterpretations of it. Witness the supposition almost universally received among them, that they needed only to make clean the outside of the cup: that the paying tythe of mint, anise and cummin,

outward exactneſs would atone for inward unholineſs; for the total neglect both of juſtice and mercy, of faith and the love of God. Yea, ſo abſolutely was the ſpiritual meaning of the law hidden from the wiſeſt of them, that one of their moſt eminent Rabbi's comments thus, on thoſe words of the Pſalmiſt, *If I incline unto iniquity with my heart, the Lord will not hear me:* that is, ſaith he, if it be only in my heart, if I do not commit outward wickedneſs, the Lord will not regard it; he will not puniſh me, unleſs I proceed to the outward act!

4. But alas! The law of God, as to its inward ſpiritual meaning, is not hid from the Jews or Heathens only, but even from what is called the Chriſtian world; at leaſt, from a vaſt majority of them. The ſpiritual ſenſe of the commandments of God, is ſtill a myſtery to theſe alſo. Nor is this obſervable alſo in thoſe lands, which are overſpread with *Romiſh* darkneſs and ignorance. But this is too ſure, that the far greater part, even of thoſe, who are called *reformed Chriſtians*, are utter ſtrangers at this day to the law of Chriſt, in the purity and ſpirituality of it.

5. Hence it is that to this day *the Scribes and Phariſees*, the men who have the form but not the power of religion, and who are generally wiſe in their own eyes, and righteous in their own conceits; *hearing theſe things are offended:* are deeply offended, when we ſpeak of the religion of the heart, and particularly when we ſhew, that without

without this, were we to *give all our goods to feed the poor*, it would profit us nothing. But offended they muſt be: for we cannot but ſpeak the truth as it is in Jeſus. It is our part, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, to deliver our own ſoul. All that is written in the book of God we are to declare, not as pleaſing men, but the Lord. We are to declare not only all the promiſes, but all the threatnings too which we find therein. At the ſame time that we proclaim all the bleſſings and privileges, which God hath prepared for his children, we are likewiſe to *teach all the things, whatſoever he hath commanded*. And we know, that all theſe have their uſe; either for the awakening thoſe that ſleep, the inſtructing the ignorant, the comforting the feeble-minded, or the building up and perfecting of the ſaints. We know that *all ſcripture, given by inſpiration of God, is profitable* either *for doctrine*, or *for reproof*, either *for correction* or *for inſtruction in righteouſneſs*: and *that the man of God*, in the proceſs of the work of God in his ſoul, has need of every part thereof, that he *may at length be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good works*.

6. It is our part, thus to *preach Chriſt*, by preaching all things whatſoever he hath revealed. We may indeed without blame, yea, and with a peculiar bleſſing from God, declare the love of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. We may ſpeak, in a more eſpecial manner, *of the Lord our righteouſneſs*. We may expatiate upon the grace of *God in Chriſt*,

reconciling the world unto himſelf. We may, at proper opportunities, dwell upon his praiſe, as bearing *the iniquities of us all*, as *wounded for our tranſgreſſions* and *bruiſed for our iniquities*, that *by his ſtripes we* might *be healed.* But ſtill we ſhould not *preach Chriſt*, according to his word, if we were wholly to confine ourſelves to this. We are not ourſelves clear before God, unleſs we proclaim him in all his offices. *To preach Chriſt*, as a workman that needeth not to be aſhamed, is to preach him not only as our great *High-prieſt, taken from among men, and ordained for men, in things pertaining to God*; as ſuch, *reconciling us to God by his blood*, and *ever living to make interceſſion for us:* but likewiſe as the prophet of the Lord, *who of God is made unto us wiſdom.* Who by his word, and his Spirit, *is with us always, guiding us into all truth:* yea, and as remaining a King for ever; as giving laws to all whom he has bought with his blood: as reſtoring thoſe to the image of God, whom he had firſt re-inſtated in his favour: as reigning in all believing hearts, until he has *ſubdued all things to himſelf*; until he hath utterly caſt out all ſin, and *brought in everlaſting righteouſneſs.*

II. 1. *We eſtabliſh the law*, ſecondly, when we ſo preach faith in Chriſt, as not to ſuperſede, but produce holineſs: to produce all manner of holineſs, negative and poſitive, of the heart and of the life.

In

In order to this, we continually declare (what ſhould be frequently and deeply conſidered, by all who would not *make void the law thro' faith)* that faith itſelf, even Chriſtian faith, the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God, ſtill is only the hand-maid of love. As glorious and honourable as it is, it is not the end of the commandment. God hath given this honour to love alone: love is the end of all the commandments of God. Love is the end, the ſole end of every diſpenſation of God, from the beginning of the world, to the conſummation of all things. And it will endure when heaven and earth flee away; for *love* alone *never faileth*. Faith will totally fail: it will be ſwallowed up in ſight, in the everlaſting viſion of God. But even then love

"Its nature and its office ſtill the ſame,
Laſting its lamp and unconſum'd its flame,
In deathleſs triumph ſhall for ever live,
And endleſs good diffuſe, and endleſs praiſe receive."

2. Very excellent things are ſpoken of faith, and whoſoever is a partaker thereof, may well ſay with the apoſtle, *Thanks be to God, for his unſpeakable gift*. Yet ſtill it loſes all its excellence, when brought into a compariſon with love. What St. *Paul* obſerves concerning the ſuperior glory of the goſpel, above that of the law, may with great propriety be ſpoken of the ſuperior

glory of love, above that of faith. *Even that which was made glorious, hath no glory in this reſpect, by reaſon of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away is glorious, much more doth that which remaineth exceed in glory.* Yea, all the glory of faith before it is done away, ariſes hence, That it miniſters to love. It is the great temporary means which God has ordained to promote that eternal end.

3. * Let thoſe who magnify faith beyond all proportion, ſo as to ſwallow up all things elſe, and who ſo totally miſapprehend the nature of it, as to imagine it ſtands in the place of love, conſider farther, That as love will exiſt after faith, ſo it did exiſt long before it. The angels, who from the moment of their creation, beheld the face of their Father that is in heaven, had no occaſion for faith, in its general notion, as it is the evidence of things not ſeen. Neither had they need of faith, in its more particular acceptation, faith in the blood of Jeſus: for he took not upon him the nature of angels; but only the ſeed of *Abraham*. There was therefore no place before the foundation of the world, for faith either in the general or particular ſenſe. But there was for love. Love exiſted from eternity, in God, the great ocean of love. Love had a place in all the children of God, from the moment of their creation. They received at once from their gracious Creator, to exiſt, and to love.

4. Nor

4. Nor is it certain (as ingeniouſly and plauſibly as many have deſcanted upon this.) That faith, even in the general ſenſe of the word, had any place in paradiſe. It is highly probable, from that ſhort and uncircumſtantial account which we have in holy writ, That *Adam* before he rebelled againſt God, walked with him by ſight and not by faith.

" For then his reaſon's eye was ſtrong and clear,
And as an eagle can behold the ſun,
Might have beheld his Maker's face as near,
As th' intellectual angels could have done."

He was then able to talk with him face to face, whoſe face we cannot now ſee and live. And conſequently had no need of that faith, whoſe office it is, to ſupply the want of ſight.

5. On the other hand, it is abſolutely certain, faith in its particular ſenſe had then no place. For in that ſenſe it neceſſarily pre-ſuppoſes ſin, and the wrath of God declared againſt the ſinner: without which there is no need of an atonement for ſin, in order to the ſinner's reconciliation with God. Conſequently, as there was no need of an atonement before the fall, ſo there was no place for faith in that atonement: man being then pure from every ſtain of ſin, holy as God is holy. But love even then filled his heart. It reigned in him without a rival. And it was only when love was loſt by ſin, that faith was added,

not for its own ſake, nor with any deſign, that it ſhould exiſt any longer, than until it had anſwered the end for which it was ordained, namely, To reſtore man, to the love from which he was fallen. At the fall therefore was added this evidence of things unſeen, which before was utterly needleſs: this confidence in redeeming love, which could not poſſibly have any place, till the promiſe was made, that the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head.

6. * Faith then was originally deſigned of God, to re-eſtabliſh the law of love. Therefore in ſpeaking thus, we are not undervaluing it, or robbing it of its due praiſe: but on the contrary ſhewing its real worth, exalting it in its juſt proportion, and giving it that very place which the wiſdom of God aſſigned it from the beginning. It is the grand means of reſtoring that holy love, wherein man was originally created. It follows, that altho' faith is of no value in itſelf (as neither is any other means whatſoever) yet as it leads to that end, the eſtabliſhing anew the law of love in our hearts, and as, in the preſent ſtate of things, it is the only means under heaven for effecting it: it is, on that account, an unſpeakable bleſſing to man, and of unſpeakable value before God.

III. 1. And this naturally brings us to obſerve, thirdly, The moſt important way of *eſtabliſhing the law:* namely, The eſtabliſhing it in our own hearts

hearts and lives. Indeed without this, what would all the reſt avail? We might eſtabliſh it by our doctrine; we might preach it in its whole extent, might explain and inforce every part of it. We might open it in its moſt ſpiritual meaning, and declare the myſteries of the kingdom: we might preach Chriſt in all his offices, and faith in Chriſt, as opening all the treaſures of his love. And yet all this time, if the law we preached, were not eſtabliſhed in our hearts, we ſhould be of no more account before God, than *ſounding braſs or tinkling cymbals*. All our preaching would be ſo far from profiting ourſelves, that it would only increaſe our damnation.

2. This is therefore the main point to be conſidered, how may we eſtabliſh the law in our own hearts, ſo that it may have its full influence on our lives? And this can only be done by faith.

Faith alone it is, which effectually anſwers this end, as we learn from daily experience. For ſo long as we walk by faith not by ſight, we go ſwiftly on in the way of holineſs. While we ſteadily look, not at the things which are ſeen, but at thoſe which are not ſeen, we are more and more crucified to the world and the world crucified to us. Let but the eye of the ſoul be conſtantly fixed, not on the things which are temporal, but on thoſe which are eternal, and our affections are more and more looſened from

earth, and fixed on things above. So that faith in general is the moſt direct and effectual means of promoting all righteouſneſs and true holineſs: of eſtabliſhing the holy and ſpiritual law, in the hearts of them that believe.

3. And by faith, taken in its more particular meaning, for a confidence in a pardoning God, we eſtabliſh his law in our own hearts, in a ſtill more effectual manner. For there is no motive which ſo powerfully inclines us to love God, as the ſenſe of the love of God in Chriſt. Nothing enables us like a piercing conviction of this, to give our hearts to him who was given for us. And from this principle of grateful love to God, ariſes love to our brother alſo. Neither can we avoid loving our neighbour, if we truly believe the love wherewith God hath loved us. Now this love to man grounded on faith and love to God, *worketh no ill to* our *neighbour*. Conſequently, it is (as the Apoſtle obſerves) *the fulfilling of the* whole negative *law*. *For this, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery, Thou ſhalt not kill, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs, Thou ſhalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* Neither is love content with barely working no evil to our neighbour. It continually incites us to do good: as we have time, and opportunity, to do good in every poſſible kind and in every poſſible degree to all men. It is there-

fore

fore the fulfilling of the positive likewise, as well as of the negative law of God.

4. Nor does faith fulfil either the negative or positive law, as to the external part only: but it works inwardly by love, to the purifying of the heart, the cleansing it from all vile affections. *Every one that hath this* faith *in him purifieth himself even as he is pure:* purifieth himself from every earthly, sensual desire, from all vile and inordinate affections: yea, from the whole of that carnal mind, which is enmity against God. At the same time, if it have its perfect work, it fills him with all goodness, righteousness and truth. It brings all heaven into his soul, and causes him to walk in the light even as God is in the light.

5. Let us thus endeavour to establish the law in ourselves: not sinning, *because we are under grace*, but rather using all the power we receive thereby, *to fulfil all righteousness*. Calling to mind, what light we received from God, while his Spirit was convincing us of sin, let us beware we do not put out that light; what we had then attained let us hold fast. Let nothing induce us to build again what we have destroyed; to resume any thing, small or great, which we then clearly saw was not for the glory of God, or the profit of our own soul: or to neglect any thing, small or great, which we could not then neglect, without a check from our own conscience. To increase and perfect the light which we had before,

fore, let us now add the light of faith. Confirm we the former gift of God, by a deeper ſenſe of whatever he had then ſhewn us; by a greater tenderneſs of conſcience, and a more exquiſite ſenſibility of ſin. Walking now with joy and not with fear, in a clear, ſteady ſight of things eternal, we ſhall look on pleaſure, wealth, praiſe, all the things of earth, as on bubbles upon the water: counting nothing important, nothing deſirable, nothing worth a deliberate thought, but only what is *within the veil*, where *Jeſus ſitteth at the right hand of God.*

6. Can *you* ſay, *Thou art merciful to* my *unrighteouſneſs: my ſins thou remembereſt no more?* * Then for the time to come, ſee that you fly from ſin, as from the face of a ſerpent. For how exceeding ſinful does it appear to you now? How heinous above all expreſſion? On the other hand, in how amiable a light do you now ſee the holy and perfect will of God? Now therefore labour that it may be fulfilled, both in you, by you, and upon you. Now watch and pray that you may ſin no more, that you may ſee and ſhun the leaſt tranſgreſſion of his law. You ſee the motes which you could not ſee before, as when the ſun ſhines into a dark place. In like manner, you ſee the ſins which you could not ſee before, now the Sun of Righteouſneſs ſhines in your heart. Now then do all diligence to walk in every reſpect, according to the light you have received. Now be zealous to receive more

more light daily, more of the knowledge and love of God, more of the Spirit of Chriſt, more of his life, and of the power of his reſurrection. Now uſe all the knowledge, and love, and life, and power you have already attained. So ſhall you continually go on from faith to faith. So ſhall you daily increaſe in holy love, till faith is ſwallowed up in ſight, and the law of love eſtabliſhed to all eternity.

SERMON

SERMON XXXVII.

THE NATURE OF ENTHUSIASM.

ACTS xxvi. 24.

And Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, Thou art beside thyself.

1. AND so say all the world, the men who know not God, of all that are of *Paul's* religion; of every one who is so a follower of him, as he was of Christ. It is true, there is a sort of religion, nay and it is called Christianity too, which may be practised without any such imputation, which is generally allowed to be consistent with common sense. That is, a religion of form, a round of outward duties, performed in a decent, regular manner. You may add orthodoxy thereto, a system of right opinions, yea, and some quantity of Heathen morality. And yet not many will pronounce, that *much* religion *hath made you mad.* But if you aim at the religion of the heart, if you talk of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, then it will not be long before *your* sentence is past, *Thou art beside thyself.*

2. And

2. And it is no compliment which the men of the world pay you herein. They, for once, mean what they say. They not only affirm, but cordially believe, that every man is *beside himself*, who says, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him, and that God has enabled him to rejoice in Christ, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If a man is indeed alive to God, and dead to all things here below; if he continually sees him that is invisible, and accordingly walks by faith and not by sight: then they account it a clear case: beyond all dispute, *much* religion *hath made him mad*.

3. * It is easy to observe, that the determinate thing which the world accounts madness, is that utter contempt of all temporal things, and steady pursuit of things eternal; that divine conviction of things not seen; that rejoicing in the favour of God; that happy, holy love of God; and that testimony of his Spirit with our spirit, that we are the children of God. That is, in truth, the whole spirit and life and power of the religion of Jesus Christ.

4. They will however allow, in other respects, the man acts and talks like one in his senses. In other things, he is a reasonable man: 'tis in these instances only his head is touched. It is therefore acknowledged, that the madness under which he labours, is of a particular kind. And

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accordingly they are accuſtomed to diſtinguiſh it by a particular name, *Enthuſiaſm*.

5. A term this, which is exceeding frequently uſed, which is ſcarce ever out of ſome men's mouths. And yet it is exceeding rarely underſtood, even by thoſe who uſe it moſt. It may be therefore not unacceptable to ſerious men, to all who deſire to underſtand what they ſpeak or hear, if I endeavour to explain the meaning of this term, to ſhew what *Enthuſiaſm* is. It may be an encouragement to thoſe who are unjuſtly charged therewith: and may poſſibly be of uſe, to ſome who are juſtly charged with it, at leaſt to others, who might be ſo, were they not cautioned againſt it.

6. As to the word itſelf, it is generally allowed to be of *Greek* extraction. But whence the *Greek* word ἐνθουσιασμός, is derived, none has yet been able to ſhew. Some have endeavoured to derive it from ἐν Θεῳ, *in God*, becauſe all *Enthuſiaſm* has reference to him. But this is quite forced; there being ſmall reſemblance between the word derived, and thoſe they ſtrive to derive it from. Others would derive it from ἐν θυσίᾳ, *in ſacrifice*, becauſe many of the *Enthuſiaſts* of old, were affected in the moſt violent manner, during the time of ſacrifice. Perhaps it is a fictitious word, invented from the noiſe, which ſome of thoſe made who were ſo affected.

7. It is not improbable, that one reaſon why this uncouth word has been retained in ſo many languages,

languages, was becauſe men were no better agreed, concerning the meaning than concerning the derivation of it. They therefore adopted the *Greek* word, becauſe they did not underſtand it: they did not tranſlate it into their own tongues, becauſe they knew not how to tranſlate it: it having been always a word of a looſe, uncertain ſenſe, to which no determinate meaning was affixed.

8. It is not therefore at all ſurprizing, that it is ſo variouſly taken at this day: different perſons underſtanding it in different ſenſes, quite inconſiſtent with each other. Some take it in a good ſenſe, for a divine impulſe or impreſſion, ſuperior to all the natural faculties, and ſuſpending for the time, either in whole or in part, both the reaſon and the outward ſenſes. In this meaning of the word, both the prophets of old, and the apoſtles were proper *Enthuſiaſts:* being at divers times ſo filled with the Spirit, and ſo influenced by him who dwelt in their hearts, that the exerciſe of their own reaſon, their ſenſes, and all their natural faculties being ſuſpended, they were wholly actuated by the power of God, and *ſpoke* only *as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.*

9. Others take the word in an indifferent ſenſe, ſuch as is neither morally good nor evil. Thus they ſpeak of the *Enthuſiaſm* of the poets; of *Homer* and *Virgil* in particular. And this a late eminent writer extends ſo far as to aſſert, there

there is no man excellent in his profeſſion, whatſoever it be, who has not in his temper a ſtrong tincture of *Enthuſiaſm*. By *Enthuſiaſm* theſe appear to underſtand, an uncommon vigour of thought, a peculiar fervor of ſpirit, a vivacity and ſtrength not to be found in common men: elevating the ſoul to greater and higher things, than cool reaſon could have attained.

10. But neither of theſe is the ſenſe wherein the word *Enthuſiaſm* is moſt uſually underſtood. The generality of men, if no farther agreed, at leaſt agree thus far concerning it, that it is ſomething evil: and this is plainly the ſentiment of all thoſe, who call the religion of the heart, *Enthuſiaſm*. Accordingly I ſhall take it in the following pages, as an evil; a misfortune, if not a fault.

11. * As to the nature of *Enthuſiaſm*, it is undoubtedly a diſorder of the mind; and ſuch a diſorder, as greatly hinders the exerciſe of reaſon. Nay ſometimes, it wholly ſets it aſide: it not only dims, but ſhuts the eyes of the underſtanding. It may therefore well be accounted a ſpecies of madneſs; of madneſs rather than of folly: ſeeing a fool is properly one who draws wrong concluſions from right premiſes: whereas a madman draws right concluſions, but from wrong premiſes. And ſo does an Enthuſiaſt. Suppoſe his premiſes true, and his concluſions would neceſſarily follow. But here lies his miſ-

take;

take, his premiſes are falſe. He imagines himſelf to be what he is not. And therefore ſetting out wrong, the farther he goes, the more he wanders out of the way.

12. * Every *Enthuſiaſt* then is properly a madman. Yet his is not an ordinary, but a religious madneſs. By religious, I do not mean, that it is any part of religion. Quite the reverſe: religion is, the ſpirit of a ſound mind: and conſequently ſtands in direct oppoſition to madneſs of every kind. But I mean, it has religion for its object; it is converſant about religion. And ſo the *Enthuſiaſt* is generally talking of religion, of God or the things of God: but talking in ſuch a manner that every reaſonable Chriſtian may diſcern the diſorder of his mind. *Enthuſiaſm* in general may then be deſcribed in ſome ſuch manner as this: a religious madneſs ariſing from ſome falſely imagined influence or inſpiration of God: at leaſt, from imputing ſomething to God which ought not to be imputed to him, or expecting ſomething from God which ought not to be expected from him.

13. There are innumerable ſorts of *Enthuſiaſm*. Thoſe which are moſt common and for that reaſon moſt dangerous, I ſhall endeavour to reduce under a few general heads, that they may be more eaſily underſtood and avoided.

The firſt ſort of *Enthuſiaſm* which I ſhall mention, is that of thoſe who imagine they have the *grace* which they have not. Thus ſome imagine,

gine, when it is not ſo, that they have *redemption* thro' Chriſt, *even the forgiveneſs of ſin.* Theſe are uſually ſuch as *have no root in themſelves*; no deep repentance, or thorough conviction. *Therefore they receive the word with joy.* And *becauſe they have no deepneſs of earth*, no deep work in their heart, therefore the ſeed *immediately ſprings up.* There is immediately a ſuperficial change, which together with that light joy, ſtriking in with the pride of their unbroken heart, and with their inordinate ſelf-love, eaſily perſuades them, they have already *taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.*

14. This is properly an inſtance of the firſt ſort of *Enthuſiaſm:* it is a kind of madneſs, ariſing from the imagination: that they have that grace which in truth they have not: ſo that they only deceive their own ſouls. Madneſs it may juſtly be termed: for the reaſonings of theſe poor men are right, were their premiſes good: but as thoſe are a mere creature of their own imagination, ſo all that is built on them falls to the ground. The foundation of all their reveries is this: they imagine themſelves to have faith in Chriſt. If they had this, they would be *Kings and Prieſts to God*, poſſeſt of *a kingdom which cannot be moved.* But they have it not. Conſequently, all their following behaviour, is as wide of truth and ſoberneſs, as that of the ordinary madman, who fancying himſelf

ſelf an earthly King, ſpeaks and acts in that character.

15. * There are many other *Enthuſiaſts* of this ſort. Such, for inſtance, is the fiery zealot for religion; or (more probably) for the opinions and modes of worſhip, which he dignifies with that name. This man alſo ſtrongly imagines himſelf, to be a believer in Jeſus, yea, that he is a champion for the faith, which was once delivered to the ſaints. Accordingly all his conduct is formed, upon that vain imagination. And allowing his ſuppoſition to be juſt, he would have ſome tolerable plea for his behaviour: whereas now it is evidently the effect of a diſtempered brain, as well as of a diſtempered heart.

16. * But the moſt common of all the *Enthuſiaſts* of this kind, are thoſe who imagine themſelves Chriſtians, and are not. Theſe abound not only in all parts of our land, but in moſt parts of the habitable earth. That they are not Chriſtians is clear and undeniable, if we believe the oracles of God. For Chriſtians are holy; theſe are unholy: Chriſtians love God; theſe love the world. Chriſtians are humble; theſe are proud: Chriſtians are gentle; theſe are paſſionate. Chriſtians have the mind which was in Chriſt; theſe are at the utmoſt diſtance from it. Conſequently, they are no more Chriſtians, than they are archangels. Yet they imagine themſelves ſo to be; and they can give ſeveral reaſons for it. For they have been *called ſo* ever ſince they can remember: they

they were *chriſtened* many years ago: they embrace the *Chriſtian opinions*, vulgarly termed, The Chriſtian or Catholick faith. They uſe the *Chriſtian modes of worſhip*, as their fathers did before them. They live what is called a good, *Chriſtian life*, as the reſt of their neighbours do. And who ſhall preſume to think or ſay, that theſe men are not Chriſtians? Tho' without one grain of true faith in Chriſt, or of real, inward holineſs! without ever having taſted the love of God, or been *made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*.

17. * Ah poor ſelf-deceivers! Chriſtians ye are not. But you are *Enthuſiaſts* in a high degree. Phyſicians, heal yourſelves. But firſt, know your diſeaſe: your whole life is *Enthuſiaſm:* as being all ſuitable to the imagination, that you have received that grace of God which you have not. In conſequence of this grand miſtake, you blunder on, day by day, ſpeaking and acting under a character, which does in no wiſe belong to you. Hence ariſes that palpable, glaring inconſiſtency, that runs thro' your whole behaviour: which is an aukward mixture of real Heatheniſm and imaginary Chriſtianity. Yet ſtill, as you have ſo vaſt a majority on your ſide, you will always carry it by mere dint of numbers, "That you are the only men in your ſenſes, and all are lunaticks who are not as you are." But this alters not the nature of things. In the ſight of God and his holy angels, yea, and all the children of God upon earth, you are

mere

mere madmen, mere *Enthuſiaſts* all. Are you not? Are you not *walking in a vain ſhadow*, a ſhadow of religion, a ſhadow of happineſs? Are you not ſtill *diſquieting yourſelves in vain?* With misfortunes as imaginary as your happineſs or religion? Do you not fancy yourſelves great or good? Very knowing, and very wiſe! How long? Perhaps till death brings you back to your ſenſes; to bewail your folly for ever and ever!

18. A ſecond ſort of *Enthuſiaſm*, is that of thoſe, who imagine they have ſuch *gifts* from God as they have not. Thus ſome have imagined themſelves to be endued with a power of working miracles, of healing the ſick by a word or a touch, of reſtoring ſight to the blind; yea, even of raiſing the dead, a notorious inſtance of which is ſtill freſh in our own hiſtory. Others have undertaken to propheſy, to foretel things to come, and that with the utmoſt certainty and exactneſs. But a little time uſually convinces theſe *Enthuſiaſts*. When plain facts run counter to their predictions, experience performs what reaſon could not, and ſinks them down into their ſenſes.

19. To the ſame claſs belong thoſe, who in preaching or prayer, imagine themſelves to be ſo influenced by the Spirit of God as in fact they are not. I am ſenſible indeed, that without him we can do nothing; more eſpecially in our public miniſtry: that all our preaching is utterly vain, unleſs it be attended with his power; and all our prayer, unleſs his Spirit therein help our

infirmities. I know, if we do not both preach and pray by the Spirit, it is all but loſt labour: ſeeing the help that is done upon earth, he doth it himſelf, who worketh all in all. But this does not affect the caſe before us. Tho' there is a real influence of the Spirit of God, there is alſo an imaginary one; and many there are who miſtake the one for the other. Many ſuppoſe themſelves to be under that influence, when they are not, when it is far from them. And many others ſuppoſe, they are more under that influence than they really are. Of this number, I fear, are all they who imagine, that God dictates the very words they ſpeak: and that conſequently, it is impoſſible they ſhould ſpeak any thing amiſs, either as to the matter or manner of it. It is well known, how many *Enthuſiaſts* of this ſort alſo, have appeared during the preſent century: ſome of whom ſpeak in a far more authoritative manner, than either St. *Paul* or any of the apoſtles.

20. The ſame ſort of *Enthuſiaſm*, tho' in a lower degree, is frequently found in men of a private character. They may likewiſe imagine themſelves to be influenced or directed by the Spirit, when they are not. I allow, *if any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt he is none of his:* and that if ever we either think, ſpeak, or act aright, it is thro' the aſſiſtance of that bleſſed Spirit. But how many impute things to him, or expect things from him, without any rational or ſcriptural ground? Such are they who imagine, they either

either do or ſhall receive *particular directions* from God, not only in points of importance, but in things of no moment, in the moſt trifling circumſtances of life. Whereas in theſe caſes God has given us our own reaſon for a guide: tho' never excluding the *ſecret aſſiſtance* of his Spirit.

21. To this kind of *Enthuſiaſm* they are peculiarly expoſed, who expect to be directed of God, either in ſpiritual things or in common life, in what is juſtly called, an *extraordinary* manner. I mean, by viſions or dreams, by ſtrong impreſſions or ſudden impulſes on the mind. I do not deny, that God has of old times manifeſted his will in this manner. Or, that he can do ſo now. Nay, I believe, he does, in ſome very rare inſtances. But how frequently do men miſtake herein? How are they miſled by pride and a warm imagination, to aſcribe ſuch impulſes or impreſſions, dreams or viſions to God, as are utterly unworthy of him? Now this is all pure *Enthuſiaſm*, all as wide of religion, as it is of truth and ſoberneſs.

22. Perhaps ſome may aſk, "Ought we not then to enquire, What is *the will of God* in all things? And ought not his will to be the rule of our practice?" Unqueſtionably it ought. But how is a ſober Chriſtian to make this enquiry? To know, what is *the will of God?* Not by waiting for ſupernatural dreams. Not by expecting God to reveal it in viſions. Not by looking for any *particular impreſſions*, or ſudden impulſes on

his mind. No: but by consulting the oracles of God. *To the law and to the testimony.* This is the general method of knowing what is *the holy and acceptable will of God.*

23. "But how shall I know what is *the will of God*, in such and such a particular case? The thing proposed is in itself of an indifferent nature, and so left undetermined in scripture." I answer, The scripture itself gives you a general rule, applicable to all particular cases. *The will of God is our sanctification.* It is his will that we should be inwardly and outwardly holy; that we should *be good and do good* in every kind, and in the highest degree whereof we are capable. Thus far we tread upon firm ground. This is as clear as the shining of the sun. In order therefore to know, what is *the will of God* in a particular case, we have only to apply this general rule.

24. * Suppose, for instance, it were proposed to a reasonable man, to marry, or to enter into a new business: in order to know, whether this is *the will of God*, being assured, "It is *the will of God* concerning me, that I should be as holy and do as much good as I can," he has only to inquire, "In which of these states can I be most holy, and do the most good?" And this is to be determined, partly by reason, and partly by experience. Experience tells him what advantages he has in his present state, either for being or doing good: and reason is to shew, what he

he certainly or probably will have in the ſtate propoſed. By comparing theſe, he is to judge, which of the two may moſt conduce to his being and doing good: and as far as he knows this, ſo far he is certain, what is *the will of God*.

25 * Meantime, the aſſiſtance of his Spirit is ſuppoſed, during the whole proceſs of the inquiry. Indeed 'tis not eaſy to ſay, in how many ways, that aſſiſtance is conveyed. He may bring many circumſtances to our remembrance, may place others in a ſtronger and clearer light; may inſenſibly open our mind to receive conviction, and fix that conviction upon our heart. And to a concurrence of many circumſtances of this kind, in favour of what is acceptable in his ſight, he may ſuperadd ſuch an unutterable peace of mind, and ſo uncommon a meaſure of his love, as will leave us no poſſibility of doubting, That *this* even *this*, is his will concerning us.

26. * This is the plain, ſcriptural, rational way to know, what is *the will of God* in a particular caſe. But conſidering how ſeldom this way is taken, and what a flood of *Enthuſiaſm* muſt needs break in, on thoſe who endeavour to know *the will of God*, by unſcriptural, irrational ways: it were to be wiſhed, that the expreſſion itſelf, were far more ſparingly uſed. The uſing it, as ſome do, on the moſt trivial occaſions, is a plain breach of the third commandment. It is a groſs way of taking the name of God in vain, and betrays great irreverence toward him. Would it

not be far better then, to use other expressions, which are not liable to such objections? For example. Instead of saying, on any particular occasion, "I want to know what is *the will of God.*" Would it not be better to say, "I want to know, what will be most for my improvement: and, what will make me most useful." This way of speaking is clear and unexceptionable. It is putting the matter on a plain scriptural issue, and that without any danger of *Enthusiasm.*

27. A third very common sort of *Enthusiasm* (if it does not co-incide with the former) is that of those who think to attain the end without using the means, by the immediate power of God. If indeed those means were providentially with-held, they would not fall under this charge. God can, and sometimes does, in cases of this nature, exert his own immediate power. But they who expect this when they have those means, and will not use them, are proper *Enthusiasts.* Such are they who expect to understand the holy scriptures, without reading them and meditating thereon: yea, without using all such helps as are in their power, and may probably conduce to that end. Such are they who *designedly* speak in the public assembly, without any premeditation. I say *designedly:* because there may be such circumstances, as at some times make it unavoidable. But whoever *despises* that great means of speaking profitably, is so far an *Enthusiast.*

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28. * It may be expected that I should mention what some have accounted, a fourth sort of *Enthusiasm*, namely, The imagining those things to be owing to the providence of God, which are not owing thereto. But I doubt. I know not what things they are, which are not owing to the providence of God: in ordering, or, at least, in governing of which, this is not either directly or remotely concerned. I except nothing but sin: and even in the sins of others, I see the providence of God to *me*. I do not say, his *general providence*; for this I take to be a sounding word, which means just nothing. And if there be a *particular providence*, it must extend to all persons and all things. So our Lord understood it, or he could never have said, *Even the hairs of your head are all numbred*. And, *Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of your Father which is in heaven*. But if it be so, if God presides *universis tanquam singulis, et singulis tanquam universis*; over the whole universe as over every single person, over every single person as over the whole universe: what is it (except only our own sins) which we are not to ascribe to the providence of God? So that I cannot apprehend, there is any room here, for the charge of *Enthusiasm*.

29. *If it be said, The charge lies here: "when you impute *this* to providence, you imagine yourself the peculiar favourite of heaven." I answer, you have forgot some of the last words I spoke, *Præsidet*

fidet universis tanquam singulis. His providence is over all men in the universe, as much as over any single person. Don't you see, that he who believing this, imputes any thing which befalls him to providence, does not therein make himself any more the favourite of heaven, than he supposes every man under heaven to be? Therefore you have no pretence, upon this ground, to charge him with *Enthusiasm.*

30. Against every sort of this, it behoves us to guard, with the utmost diligence: considering the dreadful effects it has so often produced, and which indeed naturally result from it. Its immediate offspring is pride; it continually increases this source from whence it flows, and hereby it alienates us more and more, from the favour and from the life of God. It dries up the very springs of faith and love; of righteousness and true holiness. Seeing all these flow from grace. But God *resisteth the proud and giveth grace* only *to the humble.*

31. Together with pride there will naturally arise an unadvisable and unconvincible spirit. So that into whatever error or fault the *Enthusiast* falls, there is small hope of his recovery. For reason will have little weight with him (as has been justly and frequently observed) who imagines he is led by an higher guide, by the immediate wisdom of God. And as he grows in pride, so he must grow in unadvisableness and in stubbornness also. He must be less and less capable

of

of being convinced, leſs ſuſceptible of perſuaſion; more and more attached to his own judgment and his own will, 'till he is altogether fixt and immovable.

32. Being thus fortified both againſt the grace of God, and againſt all advice and help from man, he is wholly left to the guidance of his own heart, and of the king of the children of pride. No marvel then that he is daily more rooted and grounded in contempt of all mankind, in furious anger, in every unkind diſpoſition, in every earthly and deviliſh temper. Neither can we wonder at the terrible outward effects, which have flowed from ſuch diſpoſitions in all ages: even all manner of wickedneſs, all the works of darkneſs, committed by thoſe who called themſelves Chriſtians, while they wrought with greedineſs ſuch things, as were hardly named even among the Heathens.

Such is the nature, ſuch the dreadful effects, of that many-headed monſter *Enthuſiaſm!* From the conſideration of which, we may now draw ſome plain inferences, with regard to our own practice.

33. And, firſt, If *Enthuſiaſm* be a term, tho' ſo frequently uſed, yet ſo rarely underſtood, take *you* care, not to talk of you know not what, not to uſe the word, till you underſtand it. As in all other points, ſo likewiſe in this, learn to think before you ſpeak. Firſt, know the meaning of this hard word; and then uſe it, if need require.

34. But if ſo few, even among men of education and learning, much more among the common ſort of men, underſtand this dark, ambiguous word, or have any fixt notion of what it means: then, ſecondly, Beware of judging or calling any man an *Enthuſiaſt* upon common report. This is by no means a ſufficient ground, for giving any name of reproach to any man: leaſt of all is it a ſufficient ground, for ſo black a term of reproach as this. The more evil it contains, the more cautious you ſhould be, how you apply it to any one: to bring ſo heavy an accuſation without full proof, being neither conſiſtent with juſtice nor mercy.

35. But if *Enthuſiaſm* be ſo great an evil, beware you are not intangled therewith yourſelf. Watch and pray that you fall not into the temptation. It eaſily befets thoſe who fear or love God. O beware you do not think of yourſelf more highly than you ought to think. Do not imagine you have attained that grace of God, to which you have attained. You may have much joy: you may have a meaſure of love, and yet not have living faith. Cry unto God that he would not ſuffer you, blind as you are, to go out of the way: that you may never fancy yourſelf a believer in Chriſt, till Chriſt is revealed in you, and till his Spirit witneſſes with your Spirit, that you are a child of God.

36. Beware you are not a fiery, perſecuting *Enthuſiaſt*. Do not imagine that God has called you,

you, (juſt contrary to the ſpirit of him you ſtile your Maſter) to deſtroy men's lives, and not to ſave them. Never dream of forcing men into the ways of God. Think yourſelf, and let think. Uſe no conſtraint in matters of religion. Even thoſe who are fartheſt out of the way, never *compel to come in*, by any other means, than reaſon, truth and love.

37. Beware you do not run with the common herd of *Enthuſiaſts*, fancying you are a Chriſtian when you are not. Preſume not to aſſume that venerable name, unleſs you have a clear, ſcriptural title thereto: unleſs you have the mind which was in Chriſt, and walk as he alſo walked.

38. Beware you do not fall into the ſecond ſort of *Enthuſiaſm*, fancying you have thoſe *gifts* from God which you have not. Truſt not in viſions or dreams; in ſudden impreſſions, or ſtrong impulſes of any kind. Remember, it is not by theſe you are to know, what is *the will of God* on any particular occaſion; but by applying the plain ſcripture-rule, with the help of experience and reaſon, and the ordinary aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God. Do not lightly take the name of God in your mouth: do not talk of *the will of God* on every trifling occaſion. But let your words as well as your actions be all tempered with reverence and godly fear.

39. Beware, laſtly, of imagining you ſhall obtain the end, without uſing the means conducive to it. God *can* give the end, without any

means at all: but you have no reaſon to think he *will*. Therefore conſtantly and carefully uſe all theſe means, which he has appointed to be the ordinary channels of his grace. Uſe every means which either reaſon or ſcripture recommends, as conducive (thro' the free love of God in Chriſt) either to the obtaining, or increaſing any of the gifts of God. Thus expect a daily growth in that pure and holy religion, which the world always did, and always will call *Enthuſiaſm:* but which, to all who are ſaved from real *Enthuſiaſm*, from merely nominal Chriſtianity, is the wiſdom of God and the power of God, the glorious image of the Moſt High: righteouſneſs and peace: a fountain of living water, ſpringing up into everlaſting life!

SERMON

SERMON XXXVIII.

A CAUTION AGAINST BIGOTRY.

MARK ix. 38, 39.

And John answered him saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.

And Jesus said, Forbid him not.

1. IN the preceding verses we read, that after the twelve had been disputing, *which of them should be the greatest*, Jesus *took a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of these little children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me* (only) *but him that sent me.* Then *John answered* (that is, said with reference to what our Lord had spoken just before) *Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.* As if he had said, "Ought we to have received him? In receiving him, should we have received thee? Ought we not rather to have forbidden him? Did not we do well therein? *But Jesus said, Forbid him not.*

2. The

2. The ſame paſſage is recited by St. *Luke*, and almoſt in the ſame words. But it may be aſked, What is this to us? Seeing no man now *caſts out devils*. Has not the power of doing this been withdrawn from the church, for twelve or fourteen hundred years? How then are *we* concerned in the caſe here propoſed, or in our Lord's deciſion of it?

3. Perhaps more nearly than is commonly imagined, the caſe propoſed being no uncommon caſe. That we may reap our full advantage from it I deſign to ſhew, firſt, In what ſenſe men may and do now *caſt out devils:* ſecondly, What we may underſtand by, *He followeth not us*. I ſhall, thirdly, explain our Lord's direction, *Forbid him not*, and conclude with an inference from the whole.

I. 1. I am, in the firſt place to ſhew, in what ſenſe men may, and do now *caſt out devils*.

In order to have the cleareſt view of this, we ſhould remember, that (according to the ſcriptural account) as God dwells and works in the children of light, ſo the devil dwells and works in the children of darkneſs. As the holy Spirit poſſeſſes the ſouls of good men, ſo the evil ſpirit poſſeſſes the ſouls of the wicked. Hence it is that the apoſtle terms him, *The God of this world:* from the uncontrolled power he has over worldly men. Hence our bleſſed Lord ſtiles him *the prince of this world:* ſo abſolute is his

his dominion over it. And hence St. *John*, *We know that we are of God*, and all who are not of God, *the whole world*, εν τω πονηρω κειται· Not, lieth in wickedneſs: but *lieth in the wicked one*; lives and moves in him, as they who are not of the world, do in God.

2. For the devil is not to be conſidered only as *a roaring lion, going about ſeeking whom he may devour*: nor barely as a ſubtle enemy, who cometh unawares upon poor ſouls, and *leads them captive at his will*: but as he who dwelleth in them and walketh in them; who *ruleth the darkneſs* or wickedneſs of *this world*, of worldly men and all their dark deſigns and actions, by keeping poſſeſſion of their hearts, ſetting up his throne there, and bringing every thought into obedience to himſelf. Thus the *ſtrong one armed keepeth his houſe*; and if this *unclean ſpirit* ſometime *go out of a man*, yet he often returns with *ſeven ſpirits worſe than himſelf, and they enter in and dwell there*. Nor can he be idle in his dwelling. He is continually *working in* theſe *children of diſobedience*. He works in them with power, with mighty energy, transforming them into his own likeneſs, effacing all the remains of the image of God, and preparing them for every evil word or work.

3. It is therefore an unqueſtionable truth, that the God and prince of this world, ſtill poſſeſſes all who know not God. Only the manner wherein he poſſeſſes them now, differs from that

that wherein he did it of old time. Then he frequently tormented their bodies, as well as ſouls, and that openly, without any diſguiſe. Now he torments their ſouls only, (unleſs in ſome rare caſes) and that as covertly as poſſible. The reaſon of this difference is plain. It was then his aim to drive mankind into ſuperſtition. Therefore he wrought as openly as he could. But 'tis his aim to drive *us* into infidelity. Therefore he works as privately as he can: for the more ſecret he is, the more he prevails.

4. Yet, if we may credit Hiſtorians, there are countries even now, where he works as openly as aforetime. "But why in ſavage and barbarous countries only? Why not in *Italy*, *France* or *England?*" For a very plain reaſon: he knows his men. And he knows what he hath to do with each. To *Laplanders*, he appears bareſaced: becauſe he is to fix them in ſuperſtition and groſs idolatry. But with you he is purſuing a different point. He is to make you idolize yourſelves: to make you wiſer in your own eyes than God himſelf, than all the oracles of God. Now in order to this, he muſt not appear in his own ſhape: that would fruſtrate his deſign. No: he uſes all his art, to make you deny his being, till he has you ſafe in his own place.

5. * He reigns therefore, altho' in a different way, yet as abſolute in one land as in the other. He has the gay *Italian* infidel in his teeth, as ſure as the wild *Tartar*. But he is faſt aſleep in the

the mouth of the lion, who is too wife to wake him out of fleep. So he only plays with him for the prefent, and when he pleafes fwallows him up.

* The God of this world holds his *Engliſh* worſhippers full as faſt at thoſe in *Lapland*. But it is not his buſineſs to affright them, leſt they ſhould fly to the God of heaven. The prince of darkneſs therefore does not appear, while he rules over theſe his willing ſubjects. The conqueror holds his captives ſo much the faſer, becauſe they imagine themſelves at liberty. Thus the *ſtrong one armed keepeth his houſe, and his goods are in peace:* neither the deiſt nor nominal Chriſtian ſuſpects he is there; ſo he and they are perfectly at peace with each other.

6. All this while he works with energy in them. He blinds the eyes of their underſtanding, ſo that the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt cannot ſhine upon them. He chains their ſouls down to earth and hell, with the chains of their own vile affections. He binds them down to the earth, by love of the world, love of money, of pleaſure, of praiſe. And by pride, envy, anger, hate, revenge, he cauſes their ſouls to draw nigh unto hell: acting the more ſecure and uncontrolled, becauſe they know not that he acts at all.

7. But how eaſily may we know the cauſe from its effects? Theſe are ſometimes groſs and palpable. So they were in the moſt refined of the

the Heathen nations. Go no farther than the admired, the virtuous *Romans*. And you will find theſe, when at the height of their learning and glory, *filled with all unrighteouſneſs; fornication, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity: whiſperers, backbiters, deſpiteful, proud boaſters, diſobedient to parents: covenant-breakers, without natural affection; implacable, unmerciful.*

8. The ſtrongeſt parts of this deſcription are confirmed by one, whom ſome may think a more unexceptionable witneſs. I mean, their brother Heathen, *Dion Caſſius*: who obſerves, that before *Cæſar*'s return from *Gaul*, not only gluttony and lewdneſs of every kind, were open and bareſaced; not only falſhood, injuſtice and unmercifulneſs abounded, in public courts as well as private families: but the moſt outrageous robberies, rapine and murders, were ſo frequent in all parts of *Rome*, that few men went out of doors without making their wills, as not knowing if they ſhould return alive.

9. * As groſs and palpable are the works of the devil, among many (if not all) the modern Heathens. The *natural religion* of the *Greeks*, *Cherokees*, *Chicaſaws*, and all other *Indians*, bordering on our ſouthern ſettlements (not of a few ſingle men, but of entire nations) is, to torture all their priſoners from morning to night, till at length they roaſt them to death; and upon the ſlighteſt, undeſigned provocation, to come behind

and

and ſhoot any of their own countrymen. Yea, it is a common thing among them, for the ſon, if he thinks his father lives too long, to knock out his brains: and for a mother, if ſhe is tired of her children, to faſten ſtones about their necks, and throw three or four of them into the river, one after another.

10. It were to be wiſhed that none but Heathens had practiſed ſuch groſs, palpable works of the devil. But we dare not ſay ſo. Even in cruelty and bloodſhed, how little have the Chriſtians come behind them? And not the *Spaniards* or *Portugueſe* alone, butchering thouſands in *South-America*. Not the *Dutch* only in the *Eaſt-Indies*, or the *French* in *North-America*, following the *Spaniards* ſtep by ſtep. Our own countrymen too have wantoned in blood, and exterminated whole nations: plainly proving thereby, what ſpirit it is, that dwells and works in the children of diſobedience.

11. Theſe monſters might almoſt make us overlook the works of the devil that are wrought in our own country. But alas! We cannot open our eyes even here, without ſeeing them on every ſide. Is it a ſmall proof of his power, that common ſwearers, drunkards, whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, robbers, ſodomites, murderers, are ſtill found in every part of our land? How triumphant does the prince of this world reign, in all theſe children of diſobedience?

12. He

12. He leſs openly, but no leſs effectually works in diſſemblers, talebearers, liars, ſlanderers: in oppreſſors and extortioners; in the perjured, the feller of his friend, his honour, his conſcience, his country. And yet theſe may talk of religion or conſcience ſtill! Of honour, virtue and public ſpirit. But they can no more deceive Satan than they can God. He likewiſe knows thoſe that are his: and a great multitude they are out of every nation and people of whom he has full poſſeſſion at this day.

13. If you conſider this, you cannot but ſee in what ſenſe, men may now alſo *caſt out devils*: yea, and every miniſter of Chriſt does caſt them out, if his Lord's work proſper in his hand.

By the power of God attending his word, he brings theſe ſinners to repentance: an entire inward as well as outward change, from all evil to all good. And this is, in a ſound ſenſe, to *caſt out devils*, out of the ſouls wherein they had hitherto dwelt. The ſtrong one can no longer keep his houſe. A ſtronger than he is come upon him, and hath caſt him out, and taken poſſeſſion for himſelf, and made it an habitation of God thro' his Spirit. Here then the energy of Satan ends, and the Son of God *deſtroys the works of the devil*. The underſtanding of the ſinner is now enlightned, and his heart ſweetly drawn to God. His deſires are refined, his affections purified: and being filled with the Holy Ghoſt, he

he grows in grace till he is not only holy in heart, but in all manner of converſation.

14. All this is indeed the work of God. It is God alone who can caſt out Satan. But he is generally pleaſed to do this by man, as an inſtrument in his hand: who is then ſaid, *to caſt out devils in his name*, by his power and authority. And he ſends whom he will ſend upon this great work: but uſually ſuch as man would never have thought of. For *his ways are not as our ways, neither his thoughts as our thoughts.* Accordingly he chuſes the weak to confound the mighty, the fooliſh, to confound the wiſe: for this plain reaſon, that he may ſecure the glory to himſelf; that *no fleſh may glory in his ſight.*

II. 1. But ſhall we not *forbid* one who thus *caſteth out devils*, if *he followeth not us?* This it ſeems was both the judgment and practice of the apoſtle, till he referred the caſe to his Maſter. *We forbad him*, ſaith he, *becauſe he followeth not us*, which he ſuppoſed to be a very ſufficient reaſon. What we may underſtand by this expreſſion, *He followeth not us*, is the next point to be conſidered.

The loweſt circumſtance we can underſtand thereby, is, he has no outward connexion with us. We do not labour in conjunction with each other. He is not our fellow-helper in the goſpel. And indeed whenſoever our Lord is pleaſed, to ſend many labourers into his harveſt, they cannot

not all act, in subordination to, or connexion with each other. Nay, they cannot all have personal acquaintance with, nor be so much as known to one another. Many there will necessarily be in different parts of the harvest, so far from having any mutual intercourse, that they will be as absolute strangers to each other, as if they had lived in different ages. And concerning any of these whom we know not, we may doubtless say, *He followeth not us.*

2. A second meaning of this expression may be, he is *not of our party.* It has long been matter of melancholy consideration, to all who pray for the peace of *Jerusalem*, that so many several parties are still subsisting, among those who are all stiled Christians. This has been particularly observable in our own countrymen, who have been continually dividing from each other, upon points of no moment, and many times such as religion had no concern in. The most trifling circumstances have given rise to different parties, which have continued for many generations. And each of these would be ready to object to one who was on the other side, *He followeth not us.*

3. That expression may mean, thirdly, he differs from us, in our *religious opinions.* There was a time, when all Christians were of one mind, as well as of one heart. So great grace was upon them all, when they were first filled with the Holy Ghost. But how short a space did this blessing continue? How soon was that unanimity

nimity loſt, and difference of opinion ſprang up again, even in the church of Chriſt? And that not in nominal, but in real Chriſtians: nay in the very chief of them, the apoſtles themſelves? Nor does it appear, that the difference which then began, was ever entirely removed. We do not find, that even thoſe pillars in the temple of God, ſo long as they remained upon earth, were ever brought to think alike, to be of one mind, particularly with regard to the ceremonial law. 'Tis therefore no way ſurprizing, that infinite varieties of opinion ſhould now be found in the Chriſtian church. A very probable conſequence of this is, that whenever we ſee any *caſting out devils*, he will be one that, in this ſenſe, *followeth not us:* that is not of our opinion. 'Tis ſcarce to be imagined he will be of our mind, in all points, even of religion. He may very probably think in a different manner from us, even on ſeveral ſubjects of importance: ſuch as, the nature and uſe of the moral law, the eternal decrees of God, the ſufficiency and efficacy of his grace, and the perſeverance of his children.

4. He may differ from us, fourthly, not only in opinion, but likewiſe in ſome points of practice. He may not approve of that manner of worſhipping God, which is practiſed in our congregation: and may judge that to be more profitable for his ſoul, which took its riſe from Mr. *Calvin*, or *Martin Luther*. He may have many

many objections to that liturgy, which we approve of, beyond all others: many doubts concerning that form of Church-government, which we eſteem both apoſtolical and ſcriptural. Perhaps he may go farther from us yet: he may, from a principle of conſcience, refrain from ſeveral of thoſe, which we believe to be the ordinances of Chriſt. Or if we both agree, that they are ordained of God, there may ſtill remain a difference between us, either as to the manner of adminiſtring thoſe ordinances, or the perſons to whom they ſhould be adminiſtred. Now the unavoidable conſequence of any of theſe differences, will be, that he who thus differs from us, muſt ſeparate himſelf, with regard to thoſe points, from our ſociety. In this reſpect therefore *he followeth not us:* he is *not* (as we phraſe it) *of our church.*

5. But in a far ſtronger ſenſe, *he followeth not us*, who is not only of a different church, but of ſuch a church as we account to be in many reſpects antiſcriptural and antichriſtian: a church which we believe to be utterly falſe and erroneous in her doctrines, as well as very dangerouſly wrong in her practice, guilty of groſs ſuperſtition as well as idolatry. A church that has added many articles to the faith, which was once delivered to the ſaints: that has dropt one whole commandment of God, and made void ſeveral of the reſt by her traditions: and that pretending the higheſt veneration for, and ſtricteſt conformity

formity to the antient church, has nevertheleſs brought in numberleſs innovations, without any warrant either from antiquity or ſcripture. Now moſt certainly *he followeth not us*, who ſtands at ſo great a diſtance from us.

6. And yet there may be a ſtill wider difference than this. He who differs from us in judgment or practice, may poſſibly ſtand at a greater diſtance from us, in affection than in judgment. And this indeed is a very natural and a very common effect of the other. The differences which begin in points of opinion, ſeldom terminate there. They generally ſpread into the affections, and then ſeparate chief friends. Nor are any animoſities ſo deep and irreconcileable, as thoſe that ſpring from diſagreement in religion. For this cauſe the bittereſt enemies of a man, are thoſe of his own houſhold. For this the father riſes againſt his own children, and the children againſt the father; and perhaps perſecute each other even to the death, thinking all the time they are doing God ſervice. It is therefore nothing more than we may expect, if thoſe who differ from us either in religious opinions or practice, ſoon contract a ſharpneſs, yea bitterneſs toward us; if they are more and more prejudiced againſt us, till they conceive as ill an opinion of our perſons as of our principles. An almoſt neceſſary conſequence of this will be, they will ſpeak in the ſame manner as they think of us. They will ſet themſelves in oppoſition to us.

and as far as they are able hinder our work: seeing it does not appear to them to be the work of God, but either of man or of the devil. He that thinks, speaks and acts in such a manner as this, in the highest sense, *followeth not us.*

7. I do not indeed conceive, That the person of whom the apostle speaks in the text (altho' we have no particular account of him, either in the context, or in any other part of holy writ) went so far as this. We have no ground to suppose, That there was any material difference between him and the apostles; much less that he had any prejudice either against them or their Master. It seems we may gather thus much from our Lord's own words, which immediately follow the text, *There is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.* But I purposely put the case in the strongest light, adding all the circumstances which can well be conceived: that being forewarned of the temptation in its full strength, we may in no case yield to it, and fight against God.

III. 1. Suppose then a man have no intercourse with us, suppose he be not of our party, suppose he separate from our church, yea, and widely differ from us, both in judgment, practice, and affection: yet if we see even this man *casting out devils, Jesus saith, Forbid him not.* This important direction of our Lord, I am, in the third place, to explain.

2. If

2. If we see this man casting out devils--But 'tis well, if in such a case, we would believe even what we saw with our eyes, if we did not give the lie to our own senses. He must be little acquainted with human nature, who does not immediately perceive, how extremely unready we should be, to believe that any man does cast out devils, who *followeth not us*, in all, or most of the senses above-recited. I had almost said, In any of them: seeing we may easily learn even from what passes in our own breasts, How unwilling men are, to allow any thing good in those, who do not in all things agree with themselves.

3. "But what is a sufficient, reasonable proof that a man does (in the sense above) cast out devils?" The answer is easy. Is there full proof, 1. That a person before us was a gross, open sinner? Secondly, That he is not so now; that he has broke off his sins, and lives a Christian life? And, thirdly, That his change was wrought by his hearing this man preach? If these three points be plain and undeniable, then you have sufficient, reasonable proof, such as you cannot resist without wilful sin, That this man casts out devils.

4. * Then *forbid him not*. Beware how you attempt to hinder him, either by your authority, or arguments, or persuasions. Do not in any wise strive to prevent his using all the power which God has given him. If you have *authority* with him, do not use that authority, to stop

the work of God. Do not furniſh him with *reaſons*, why he ought not any more to ſpeak in the name of Jeſus. Satan will not fail to ſupply him with theſe, if you do not ſecond him therein. *Perſuade* him not, to depart from the work. If he ſhould give place to the devil and you, many ſouls might periſh in their iniquity, but their blood would God require at *your* hands.

5. "But what if he be only a *Layman* who caſts out devils? Ought I not to forbid him then?"

Is the fact allowed? Is there reaſonable proof, That this man has or does *caſt out devils?* If there is, forbid him not: no, not at the peril of your ſoul. Shall not God work by whom he will work? *No man can do theſe works unleſs God is with him*, unleſs God hath ſent him for this very thing. But if God hath ſent him, will you call him back? Will you forbid him to go?

6. "But I do not know, That he is ſent of God." *Now herein is a marvellous thing* (may any of the ſeals of his miſſion ſay, any whom he hath brought from Satan to God) *that ye know not whence this man is, and behold he hath opened mine eyes! If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.* If you doubt the fact, ſend for the parents of the man: ſend for his brethren, friends, acquaintance. But if you cannot doubt this, if you muſt needs acknowledge, *That a notable miracle hath been wrought*, then with what conſcience, with what face can you *charge* him whom God hath ſent, *not to ſpeak any more in his name?*

7. I

7. I allow, That it is *highly expedient*, whoever preaches in his name, ſhould have an outward as well as an inward call. But that it is *abſolutely neceſſary* I deny.

"Nay, is not the ſcripture expreſs? *No man taketh this honour unto himſelf, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron?*" Heb. v. 4.

Numberleſs times has this text been quoted on the occaſion, as containing the very ſtrength of the cauſe. But ſurely never was ſo unhappy a quotation. For, firſt, *Aaron* was not called to preach at all. He was called *to offer gifts and ſacrifice for ſin.* That was his peculiar employment. Secondly, Theſe men do not offer ſacrifice at all; but only preach, which *Aaron* did not. Therefore it is not poſſible to find one text in all the Bible, which is more wide of the point than this.

8. "But what was the practice of the apoſtolic age?" You may eaſily ſee in the *Acts of the apoſtles.* In the 8th chapter we read, *There was a great perſecution againſt the church which was at Jeruſalem: and they were all ſcattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apoſtles*, ver. 1. *Therefore they that were ſcattered abroad, went every-where preaching the word*, ver. 4. Now were all theſe outwardly called to preach? No man in his ſenſes can think ſo. Here then is an undeniable proof, what was the practice of the apoſtolic age. Here you ſee not one, but a multitude of *Lay-preachers*, men that were only ſent of God.

9. Indeed so far is the practice of the apostolic age, from inclining us to think it was *unlawful* for a man to preach before he was ordained, that we have reason to think, it was then accounted *necessary*. Certainly the practice and the direction of the apostle *Paul* was, to *prove* a man before he was ordained at all. *Let these*, (the deacons) says he, *first be proved: then let them use the office of a deacon*—1 *Tim.* iii. 10. Proved? How? By setting them to construe a sentence of *Greek?* And asking them a few common-place questions? O amazing proof of a minister of Christ! Nay: but by making a clear, open trial (as is still done by most of the Protestant churches in *Europe*) not only whether their lives be holy and unblameable, but whether they have such gifts as are absolutely and indispensibly necessary, in order to edify the church of Christ.

10. * "But what if a man has these? And has brought sinners to repentance? And yet the bishop will not ordain him?" Then the bishop does *forbid him to cast out devils*. But I dare not forbid him. I have published my reasons to all the world. Yet 'tis still insisted, I ought to do it. You who insist upon it, answer those reasons. I know not that any have done this yet, or even made an attempt of doing it. Only some have spoken of them as very weak and trifling. And this was prudent enough. For 'tis far easier to despise, at least, seem to despise an argument than

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to anſwer it. Yet till this is done I muſt ſay, when I have reaſonable proof that any man does caſt out devils, Whatever others do, I dare not forbid him, leſt I be found even to fight againſt God.

11. And whoſoever thou art that feareſt God, *forbid him not*, either directly or indirectly. There are many ways of doing this. You indirectly forbid him, if you either wholly deny, or deſpiſe and make little account of the work which God has wrought by his hands. You indirectly forbid him, when you diſcourage him in his work, by drawing him into diſputes concerning it, by raiſing objections againſt it, or frighting him with conſequences, which very poſſibly will never be. You forbid him, when you ſhew any unkindneſs toward him, either in language or behaviour: and much more, when you ſpeak of him to others, either in an unkind or a contemptuous manner: when you endeavour to repreſent him to any, either in an odious or a deſpicable light. You are forbidding him all the time you are ſpeaking evil of him, or making no account of his labours. O forbid him not in any of theſe ways: nor by forbidding others to hear him, by diſcouraging ſinners from hearing that word, which is able to ſave their ſouls.

12. Yea, if you would obſerve our Lord's direction in its full meaning and extent, then remember his word, *He that is not for us, is againſt us; and he that gathereth not with me, ſcattereth.*

He that gathereth not men into the kingdom of God, aſſuredly ſcatters them from it. For there can be no neuter in this war. Every one is either on God's ſide or on Satan's. Are you on God's ſide? Then you will not only not forbid any man that *caſts out devils*, but you will labour to the uttermoſt of your power, to forward him in the work. You will readily acknowledge the work of God, and confeſs the greatneſs of it. You will remove all difficulties and objections, as far as may be, out of his way. You will ſtrengthen his hands by ſpeaking honourably of him before all men, and avowing the things which you have ſeen and heard. You will encourage others to attend upon his word, to hear him whom God hath ſent. And you will omit no actual proof of tender love, which God gives you an opportunity of ſhewing him.

IV. 1. If we willingly fail in any of theſe points, if we either directly or indirectly forbid him, *becauſe he followeth not us*, then we are *Bigots*. This is the inference I draw from what has been ſaid. But the term *bigotry*, I fear, as frequently as it is uſed, is almoſt as little underſtood as *Enthuſiaſm*. It is, too ſtrong an attachment to, or fondneſs for, our own party, opinion, church and religion. Therefore he is a *bigot*, who is ſo fond of any of theſe, ſo ſtrongly attached to them, as to forbid any who caſt out devils, becauſe he differs from himſelf, in any or all theſe particulars.

2. * Do

2. * Do *you* beware of this. Take care, 1. That you do not convict yourself of *bigotry*, by your unreadiness to believe, that any man does cast out devils, who differs from you. And if you are clear thus far, if you acknowledge the fact, then examine yourself, secondly, Am I not convicted of *bigotry* in this, in forbidding him, directly or indirectly? Do I not directly forbid him on this ground, because he is not of my *party?* Because he does not fall in with my *opinions?* Or because he does not worship God according to that scheme of *religion*, which I have received from my fathers?

3. * Examine yourself, do I not indirectly at least forbid him, on any of these grounds? Am I not sorry, that God should thus own and bless a man that holds such erroneous opinions? Do I not discourage him, because he is not of my church? By disputing with him concerning it, by raising objections, and by perplexing his mind with distant consequences? Do I shew no anger, contempt or unkindness of any sort, either in my words or actions? Do I not mention behind his back, his (real or supposed) faults? His defects or infirmities? Do not I hinder sinners from hearing his word? If you do any of these things, you are a *bigot* to this day.

4. *Search me, O Lord, and prove me. Try out my reins and my heart! Look well if there be any way of* bigotry *in me, and lead me in the way ever-*

laſting. In order to examine ourſelves throughly, let the caſe be propoſed in the ſtrongeſt manner. What if I were to ſee a Papiſt, an Arian, a Socinian caſting out devils? If I did, I could not forbid even him, without convicting myſelf of *bigotry*. Yea, if it could be ſuppoſed, that I ſhould ſee a Jew, a Deiſt, or a Turk doing the ſame, were I to forbid him either directly or indirectly, I ſhould be no better than a *bigot* ſtill.

5. O ſtand clear of this. But be not content with not forbidding any that caſts out devils. * 'Tis well, to go thus far, but do not ſtop here. If you will avoid all *bigotry*, go on. In every inſtance of this kind, whatever the inſtrument be, acknowledge the finger of God. And not only acknowledge, but rejoice in his work and praiſe his name with thankſgiving. Encourage whomſoever God is pleaſed to employ, to give himſelf wholly up thereto. Speak well of him whereſoever you are: defend his character and his miſſion. Enlarge as far as you can his ſphere of action. Shew him all kindneſs in word and deed. And ceaſe not to cry to God in his behalf, that he may ſave both himſelf and them that hear him.

6. I need add but one caution. Think not, the *bigotry* of another, is any excuſe for your own. 'Tis not impoſſible, that one who caſts out devils himſelf, may yet forbid you ſo to do. You may obſerve, this is the very caſe mentioned in the text. The apoſtles forbad another

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to do what they did themſelves. But beware of retorting. It is not your part, to return evil for evil. Another's not obſerving the direction of our Lord is no reaſon why you ſhould neglect it. Nay, but let him have all the *bigotry* to himſelf. If he forbids *you*, do not you forbid *him*. Rather labour and watch and pray the more, to confirm your love toward him. If he ſpeaks all manner of evil of *you*, ſpeak all manner of good (that is true) of *him*. Imitate herein that glorious ſaying of a great man (O that he had always breathed the ſame ſpirit!) "Let *Luther* call me an hundred devils: I will ſtill reverence him as a meſſenger of God."

SERMON XXXIX.

CATHOLIC SPIRIT.

2 KINGS x. 15.

And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab *the ſon of* Rechab *coming to meet him. And he ſaluted him and ſaid, Is thine heart right as my heart is with thy heart? And* Jehonadab *anſwered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand.*

1. IT is allowed even by thoſe who do not pay this great debt, that love is due to all mankind: the royal law, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf*, carrying its own evidence to all that hear it. And that, not according to the miſerable conſtruction put upon it by the zealots of old times, *thou ſhalt love thy neighbour*, thy relation, acquaintance, friend, *and hate thine enemy:* not ſo. *I ſay unto you*, ſaith our Lord, *love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you: do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you: that ye may be the children*, may appear ſo to all mankind, *of your Father which is in heaven, who maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the*

the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt.

2. But it is ſure, there is a peculiar love which we owe to thoſe that love God. So *David*, *all my delight is upon the ſaints that are in the earth and upon ſuch as excel in virtue.* And ſo a greater than he, *a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye alſo love another. By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have love one to another: John* xiii. 34, 35. This is that love on which the apoſtle *John* ſo frequently and ſtrongly inſiſts. *This*, ſaith he, *is the meſſage that ye heard from the beginning, that we ſhould love one another*, 1 *John* c. iii. 11. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, becauſe he laid down his life for us. And we ought*, if love ſhould call us thereto, *to lay down our lives for the brethren*, v. 16. And again, *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love*, c. iv. 7, 8. *Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins. Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another*, v. 10, 11.

3. All men approve of this. But do all men practiſe it? Daily experience ſhews the contrary. Where are even the Chriſtians who *love one another, as he hath given us commandment?* How many hindrances lie in the way? The two grand, general hindrances are, firſt, that they cannot

cannot all think alike: and, in consequence of this, secondly, they cannot all walk alike: but in several smaller points their practice must differ, in proportion to the difference of their sentiments.

4. But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship, may prevent an intire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another, in love and in good works.

5. Surely in this respect, the example of *Jehu* himself, as mixt a character as he was of, is well worthy both the attention and imitation, of every serious Christian. *And when he was departed thence, he lighted on* Jehonadab *the son of* Rechab *coming to meet him. And he saluted him and said, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And* Jehonadab *answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand.*

The text naturally divides itself into two parts, first, a question proposed by *Jehu* to *Jehonadab, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?* Secondly, an offer made on *Jehonadab's* answering, *it is. If it be, give me thine hand.*

I. 1. And, first, let us consider the question proposed by *Jehu* to *Jehonadab, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?*

The very firſt thing we may obſerve in theſe words, is that here is no enquiry concerning *Jehonadab*'s opinions. And yet 'tis certain, he held ſome which were very uncommon, indeed quite peculiar to himſelf: and ſome which had a cloſe influence upon his practice; on which likewiſe he laid ſo great a ſtreſs, as to intail them upon his children's children, to their lateſt poſterity. This is evident from the account given by *Jeremiah*, many years after his death. *I took* Jaazaniah *and his brethren, and all his ſons, and the whole houſe of the Rechabites—and ſet before them pots full of wine and cups, and ſaid unto them, drink ye wine. But they ſaid, we will drink no wine; for* Jonadab (or *Jehonadab*) *the ſon of* Rechab *our father* (It would be leſs ambiguous if the words were placed thus, Jehonadab *our father the ſon of* Rechab: out of love and reverence to whom he probably deſired his deſcendents might be called by his name) *commanded us, ſaying, ye ſhall drink no wine, neither ye nor your ſons for ever. Neither ſhall ye build houſe, nor ſow ſeed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye ſhall dwell in tents—and we have obeyed and done according to all that* Jonadab *our father commanded us*, Jer. xxxv. 3—10.

2. And yet *Jehu* (although it ſeems to have been his manner, both in things ſecular and religious to *drive furiouſly*) does not concern himſelf at all with any of theſe things, but lets *Jehonadab* abound in his own ſenſe. And neither of them appears to have given the other the leaſt

diſturbance,

disturbance, touching the opinions which he maintained.

3. 'Tis very possible, that many good men now also may entertain peculiar opinions: and some of them may be as singular herein, as even *Jehonabab* was. And 'tis certain, so long as *we know* but *in part*, that all men will not see all things alike. It is an unavoidable consequence of the present weakness and shortness of human understanding, that several men will be of several minds, in religion as well as in common life. So it has been from the beginning of the world, and so it will be *till the restitution of all things*.

4. Nay farther. Altho' every man necessarily believes, that every particular opinion which he holds is true (for, to believe any opinion is not true, is the same thing as, not to hold it:) yet can no man be assured, that all his own opinions taken together, are true. Nay, every thinking man is assured, they are not: seeing *Humanum est errare et nescire*. To be ignorant of many things, and to mistake in some, is the necessary condition of humanity. This therefore he is sensible is his own case. He knows in the general, that he himself is mistaken. Altho' in what particulars he mistakes, he does not, perhaps cannot know.

5. I say, perhaps he cannot know. For who can tell how far invincible ignorance may extend? Or (that comes to the same thing) invincible

cible prejudice: which is ſo often fixt in tender minds, that it is afterwards impoſſible to tear up what has taken ſo deep a root. And who can ſay, unleſs he knew every circumſtance attending it, how far any miſtake is culpable? Seeing all guilt muſt ſuppoſe ſome concurrence of the will: of which he only can judge who ſearcheth the heart.

6. Every wiſe man therefore will allow others the ſame liberty of thinking, which he deſires they ſhould allow him: and will no more inſiſt on their embracing his opinions, than he would have them to inſiſt on his embracing theirs. He bears with thoſe who differ from him, and only aſks him, with whom he deſires to unite in love, that ſingle queſtion, *Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?*

7. We may, ſecondly, obſerve, That here is no enquiry made, concerning *Jehonadab*'s mode of worſhip: altho' it is highly probably, there was in this reſpect alſo, a very wide difference between them. For we may well believe *Jehonabab* as well as all his poſterity, worſhipped God at *Jeruſalem*: whereas *Jehu* did not; he had more regard to ſtate-policy than religion. And therefore altho' he ſlew the worſhippers of *Baal, and deſtroyed* Baal *out of* Iſrael: yet *from the* convenient *ſin of* Jeroboam, the worſhip of *the golden calves, he departed not*, 2 Kings x. 29.

8. But even among men of an upright heart, men who deſire to *have a conſcience void of offence*, it

it muſt needs be, that as long as there are various opinions, there will be various ways of worſhipping God: ſeeing a variety of opinion neceſſarily implies a variety of practice. And as in all ages, men have differed in nothing more than in their opinions concerning the ſupreme Being, ſo in nothing have they more differed from each other, than in the manner of worſhipping him. Had this been only in the Heathen world, it would not have been at all ſurpriſing. For we know theſe *by their wiſdom knew not* God; nor therefore could they know how to worſhip him. But is it not ſtrange, That even in the Chriſtian world, altho' they all agree in the general, God *is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth:* yet the particular modes of worſhipping God, are almoſt as various as among the Heathens?

9. And how ſhall we chuſe, among ſo much variety? No man can chuſe for, or preſcribe to another. But every one muſt follow the dictates of his own conſcience, in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity. He muſt be fully perſuaded in his own mind, and then act according to the beſt light he has. Nor has any creature power to conſtrain another to walk by his own rule. God has given no right to any of the children of men, thus to lord it over the conſcience of his brethren. But every man muſt judge for himſelf, as every man muſt give an account of himſelf to God.

10. Altho'

10. Altho' therefore every follower of Chriſt is obliged by the very nature of the Chriſtian inſtitution, to be a member of ſome particular congregation or other, ſome church, as it is uſually termed: (which implies a particular manner of worſhipping God;) for *two cannot walk together unleſs they be agreed*; yet none can be obliged by any power on earth, but that of his own conſcience, to prefer this or that congregation to another, this or that particular manner of worſhip. I know it is commonly ſuppoſed, That the place of our birth, fixes the church to which we ought to belong: that one, for inſtance, who is born in *England* ought to be a member of that which is ſtiled *The Church of England*, and conſequently to worſhip God in the particular manner which is preſcribed by that church. I was once a zealous maintainer of this: but I find many reaſons to abate of this zeal. I fear, it is attended with ſuch difficulties, that no reaſonable man can get over. Not the leaſt of which is, that if this rule had took place, there could have been no reformation from Popery: ſeeing it intirely deſtroys the right of private judgment, on which that whole reformation ſtands.

11. I dare not therefore preſume to impoſe my mode of worſhip on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apoſtolical. But my belief is no rule for another. I aſk not therefore of him with whom I would unite in love, "Are you

you of my church? Of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of church-government, and allow the same church-officers with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer, wherein I worship God?" I inquire not, Do you receive the supper of the Lord, in the same posture and manner that I do? Nor, whether in the administration of baptism, you agree with me, in admitting sureties for the baptized? In the manner of administring it? Or the age of these to whom it should be administred? Nay, I ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind) whether you allow baptism and the Lord's supper at all? Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season. My only question at present is this, *Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?*

12. But what is properly implied in the question? I do not mean what did *Jehu* imply therein? But what should a follower of Christ understand thereby, when he proposes it to any of his brethren?

The first thing implied in this: is thy heart right with God? Dost thou believe his being, and his perfections? His eternity, immensity, wisdom, power: his justice, mercy and truth? Dost thou believe, that he now *upholdeth all things, by the word of his power?* And that he governs even the most minute, even the most noxious, to his own glory and the good of them

them that love him? Haſt thou a divine evidence, a ſupernatural conviction, of the things of God? Doſt thou *walk by faith not by ſight? Looking not at temporal things, but things eternal?*

13. Doſt thou believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, God *over all bleſſed for ever?* Is he *revealed in* thy ſoul? Doſt thou *know Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified?* Does he *dwell in thee, and thou in him?* Is he *formed in thy heart by faith?* Having abſolutely diſclaimed all thy own works, thy own righteouſneſs, haſt thou *ſubmitted thyſelf unto the righteouſneſs of* God, *which is by faith in Chriſt Jeſus?* Art thou *found in him, not having thy own righteouſneſs, but the righteouſneſs which is by faith?* And art thou, thro' him, *fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life?*

14. Is thy faith ἐνεργεμένη δι ἀγάπης. Filled with the energy of love? Doſt thou love God? I do not ſay, *above all things*; for it is both an unſcriptural and an ambiguous expreſſion: but *with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſoul and with all thy ſtrength?* Doſt thou ſeek all thy happineſs in him alone? And doſt thou find what thou ſeekeſt? Does thy ſoul continually *magnify the Lord, and thy ſpirit rejoice in* God *thy Saviour?* Having learned *in every thing to give thanks*, doſt thou find, *it is a joyful and a pleaſant thing to be thankful?* Is God the center of thy ſoul? The ſum of all thy deſires?

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Art thou accordingly *laying up* thy *treasure in heaven*, and *counting all things else dung and dross?* Hath the love of God cast the love of the world out of thy soul? Then thou art *crucified to the world.* Thou *art dead* to all *below and thy life is hid with Christ in* God.

15. * Art thou employed in doing *not thy own will, but the will of him that sent thee?* Of him that sent thee down to sojourn here a-while, to spend a few days in a strange land, till having finished the work he hath given thee to do, thou return to thy Father's house? Is it thy meat and drink *to do the will of thy Father which is in heaven?* Is *thine eye single* in all things? Always fixt on him? Always *looking unto Jesus?* Dost thou point at him in whatsoever thou dost? In all thy labour, thy business, thy conversation? Aiming only at the glory of God in all? *Whatsoever* thou dost, either *in word or deed, doing it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto* God, *even the Father thro' him?*

16. Does the love of God constrain thee to *serve* him *with fear?* To *rejoice unto him with reverence?* Art thou more afraid of displeasing God, than either of death or hell? Is nothing so terrible to thee as the thought of *offending the eyes of his glory?* Upon this ground dost thou *hate all evil ways*; every transgression of his holy and perfect law? And herein *exercise* thyself, *to*

have

have a conſcience void of offence toward God *and toward man?*

17. Is thy heart right toward thy neighbour? Doſt thou *love as thyſelf*, all mankind without exception? *If you love thoſe only that love you, what thank have you?* Do you *love your enemies?* Is your ſoul full of good-will, of tender affection toward them? Do you love even the enemies of God? The unthankful and unholy? Do your bowels yearn over them? Could you *wiſh yourſelf* (temporally) *accurſt* for their ſake? And do you ſhew this, by *bleſſing them that curſe you, and praying for thoſe that deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you?*

18. Do you ſhew your love by your works? While you have time, as you have opportunity, do you in fact *do good to all men*, neighbours or ſtrangers, friends, or enemies, good or bad? Do you do them all the good you can? Endeavouring to ſupply all their wants, aſſiſting them both in body and ſoul, to the uttermoſt of your power? If thou art thus minded, may every Chriſtian ſay, yea, if thou art but ſincerely deſirous of it, and following on till thou attain, then *thy heart is right, as my heart is with thy heart.*

II. 1. *If it be, give me thine hand.* I do not mean, "Be of my opinion." You need not. I do not expect or deſire it. Neither do I mean, "I will be of your opinion." I cannot. It does

does not depend on my choice: I can no more think, than I can see or hear as I will. Keep you your opinion, I mine: and that as steadily as ever. You need not even endeavour to come over to me, or bring me over to you. I do not desire you to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and the other. Only *give me thine hand.*

2. I do not mean, "embrace my modes of worship; or, I will embrace yours." This also is a thing which does not depend either on your choice or mine. We must both act, as each is fully persuaded in his own mind. Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same. I believe the *Episcopal* form of church-government to be scriptural and apostolical. If you think the *Presbyterian* or *Independent* is better, think so still and act accordingly. I believe infants ought to be baptized, and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion. It appears to me, that forms of prayer are of excellent use, particularly in the great congregation. If you judge extemporary prayer to be of more use, act suitable to your own judgment. My sentiment is, that I ought not to forbid water, wherein persons may be baptized: and, that I ought to eat bread and drink wine, as a memorial of my dying Master. However,

ever, if you are not convinced of this, act according to the light you have. I have no deſire to diſpute with you one moment, upon any of the preceding heads. Let all theſe ſmaller points ſtand aſide. Let them never come into ſight. *If thine heart is as my heart*, if thou loveſt God and all mankind, I aſk no more: *give me thine hand.*

3. I mean, firſt, love me. And that not only as thou loveſt all mankind; not only as thou loveſt thine enemies, or the enemies of God, thoſe that hate thee, that *deſpitefully uſe thee and perſecute thee:* not only as a ſtranger, as one of whom thou knoweſt neither good nor evil. I am not ſatisfied with this. No: *If thine heart be right, as mine with thy heart*, then love me with a very tender affection, as a friend that is cloſer than a brother: as a brother in Chriſt, a fellow-citizen of the new Jeruſalem, a fellow-ſoldier engaged in the ſame warfare, under the ſame captain of our ſalvation. Love me as a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jeſus, and a joint-heir of his glory.

4. Love me (but in an higher degree, than thou doſt the bulk of mankind) with the love that is *long-ſuffering and kind*, that is patient, if I am ignorant or out of the way, bearing and not increaſing my burthen, and is tender, ſoft and compaſſionate ſtill: that *envieth not*, if at any time it pleaſe God, to proſper me in this work even more than thee. Love me with the love

that *is not provoked* either at my follies or infirmities; or even at my acting (if it ſhould ſometimes ſo appear to thee) not according to the will of God. Love me ſo as to *think no evil* of me, to put away all jealouſy and evil ſurmiſing. Love me with the love that *covereth all things*, that never reveals either my faults or infirmities: that *believeth all things*, is always willing to think the beſt, to put the faireſt conſtruction on all my words and actions: That *hopeth all things*; either that the thing related was never done; or not done with ſuch circumſtances as are related: or at leaſt, that it was done with a good intention: or in ſudden ſtreſs of temptation. And hope to the end, that whatever is amiſs, will by the grace of God be corrected, and whatever is wanting ſupplied, thro' the riches of his mercy in Chriſt Jeſus.

5. I mean, ſecondly, commend me to God in all thy prayers, wreſtle with him in my behalf, that he would ſpeedily correct what he ſees amiſs, and ſupply what is wanting in me. In thy neareſt acceſs to the throne of grace, beg of him, who is then very preſent with thee, that my heart may be more as thy heart, more right both toward God and toward man: that I may have a fuller conviction of things not ſeen, and a ſtronger view of the love of God in Chriſt Jeſus: may more ſteadily walk by faith, not by ſight, and more earneſtly graſp eternal life. Pray, that the love of God and of all mankind,

kind, may be more largely poured into my heart; that I may be more fervent and active in doing the will of my Father which is in heaven; more zealous of good works, and more careful to abſtain from all appearance of evil.

6. I mean, thirdly, provoke me to love and to good works. Second thy prayer as thou haſt opportunity, by ſpeaking to me in love whatſoever thou believeſt to be for my ſoul's health. Quicken me in the work which God has given me to do, and inſtruct me how to do it more perfectly. Yea *ſmite me friendly and reprove me*, wherein ſoever I appear to thee, to be doing rather my own will, than the will of him that ſent me. O ſpeak and ſpare not, whatever thou believeſt may conduce, either to the amending my faults, the ſtrengthning my weakneſs, the building me up in love, or the making me more fit in any kind for the maſter's uſe.

7. I mean, laſtly, Love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth. So far as in conſcience thou canſt (retaining ſtill thy own opinions, and thy own manner of worſhipping God) join with me in the work of God, and let us go on hand in hand. And thus far, it is certain, thou mayſt go. Speak honourably wherever thou art, of the work of God by whomſoever he works, and kindly of his meſſengers. And if it be in thy power, not only ſympathize with them when they are in any difficulty or diſtreſs, but give

them a chearful and effectual aſſiſtance, that they may glorify God on my behalf.

8. Two things ſhould be obſerved, with regard to what has been ſpoken under this laſt head. The one, that whatſoever love, whatſoever offices of love, whatſoever ſpiritual or temporal aſſiſtance, I claim from him whoſe heart is right, as my heart is with his: the ſame I am ready, by the grace of God, according to my meaſure, to give him. The other, that I have not made this claim, in behalf of myſelf only, but of all whoſe heart is right toward God and man, that we may all love one another, as Chriſt hath loved us.

III. 1. One inference we may make from what has been ſaid. We may learn from hence, what is a *Catholic ſpirit.*

There is ſcarce any expreſſion which has been more groſly miſunderſtood, and more dangerouſly miſapplied than this. But it will be eaſy for any who calmly conſider the preceding obſervations, to correct any ſuch miſapprehenſions of it, and to prevent any ſuch miſapplication.

For from hence we may learn, firſt, That a *Catholic ſpirit*, is not *ſpeculative latitudinarianiſm.* It is not an indifference to all opinions. This is the ſpawn of hell, not the offſpring of heaven. This unſettledneſs of thought, this being *driven to and fro and toſt about with every wind of doctrine*, is a great curſe not a bleſſing;

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an irreconcileable enemy not a friend to true *Catholicism*. A man of a truly *Catholic spirit*, has not now his religion to ſeek. He is fixt as the ſun in his judgment concerning the main branches of Chriſtian doctrine. 'Tis true, he is always ready to hear and weigh, whatſoever can be offered againſt his principles. But as this does not ſhew any wavering in his own mind, ſo neither does it occaſion any. He does not halt between two opinions, nor vainly endeavour to blend them into one. Obſerve this, you who know not what ſpirit ye are of: who call yourſelves men of a *Catholic ſpirit*, only becauſe you are of a muddy underſtanding: becauſe your mind is all in a miſt: becauſe you have no ſettled, conſiſtent principles, but are far jumbling all opinions together. Be convinced, that you have quite miſſed your way: you know not where you are. You think you are got into the very Spirit of Chriſt; when in truth you are nearer the ſpirit of antichriſt. Go firſt and learn the firſt elements of the goſpel of Chriſt, and then ſhall you learn to be of a truly *Catholic ſpirit*.

2. From what has been ſaid we may learn, ſecondly, That a *Catholic ſpirit* is not any kind of *practical latitudinarianiſm*. It is not indifference as to public worſhip, or as to the outward manner of performing it. This likewiſe would not be a bleſſing but a curſe. Far from being an help thereto, it would ſo long as it re-

mained be an unſpeakable hindrance to the worſhipping of God in ſpirit and in truth. But the man of a truly *Catholick ſpirit*, having weighed all things in the balance of the ſanctuary, has no doubt, no ſcruple at all concerning that particular mode of worſhip wherein he joins. He is clearly convinced, that *this* manner of worſhipping God is both ſcriptural and rational. He knows none in the world, which is more ſcriptural, none which is more rational. Therefore without rambling hither and thither, he cleaves cloſe thereto, and praiſes God for the opportunity of ſo doing.

3. Hence we may, thirdly, learn. That a *Catholick ſpirit* is not indifference to all congregations. This is another ſort of latitudinarianiſm no leſs abſurd and unſcriptural than the former. But it is far from a man of a truly *Catholick ſpirit*. He is fixt in his congregation as well as his principles. He is united to one, not only in ſpirit, but by all the outward ties of Chriſtian fellowſhip. There he partakes of all the ordinances of God. There he receives the ſupper of the Lord. There he pours out his ſoul in public prayer, and joins in public praiſe and thankſgiving. There he rejoices to hear the word of reconciliation, the goſpel of the grace of God. With theſe his neareſt, his beſt beloved brethren, on ſolemn occaſions he ſeeks God by faſting. Theſe particularly he watches

over

over in love, as they do over his soul, admonishing, exhorting, comforting, reproving, and every way building up each other in the faith. These he regards as his own household, and therefore according to the ability God has given him, naturally cares for them, and provides that they may have all the things that are needful for life and godliness.

4. * But while he is steadily fixt in his religious principles, in what he believes to be the truth as it is in Jesus; while he firmly adheres to that worship of God, which he judges to be most acceptable in his sight, and while he is united by the tendereſt and closeſt ties, to one particular congregation: his heart is enlarged toward all mankind, those he knows and those he does not: he embraces with strong and cordial affection, neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. This is Catholic or universal love. And he that has this, is of a *Catholic spirit*. For love alone gives the title to this character. Catholic love is a *Catholic spirit*.

5. * But if we take this word in the strictest sense, a man of a *Catholic spirit*, is one who in the manner above-mentioned, *gives his hand*, to all whose *hearts are right with his heart*. One who knows how to value, and praise God, for all the advantages he enjoys; with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true scriptural manner of worshipping him; and above

all, his union with a congregation, fearing God and working righteouſneſs. One who retaining theſe bleſſings with the ſtricteſt care, keeping them as the apple of his eye, at the ſame time loves as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as members of Chriſt and children of God, as joint-partakers now of the preſent kingdom of God, and fellow-heirs of his eternal kingdom, all of whatever opinion or worſhip or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who love God and man; who rejoicing to pleaſe and fearing to offend God, are careful to abſtain from evil and zealous of good works. He is the man of a truly *Catholic ſpirit*, who bears all theſe continually upon his heart, who having an unſpeakable tenderneſs for their perſons, and longing for their welfare, does not ceaſe to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cauſe before men: who ſpeaks comfortably to them, and labours by all his words, to ſtrengthen their hands in God. He aſſiſts them to the uttermoſt of his power in all things, ſpiritual and temporal. He is ready *to ſpend and be ſpent for them*; yea, *to lay down his life for* their ſake.

6. Thou, O man of God, think on theſe things. If thou art already in this way, go on. If thou haſt heretofore miſtook the path, bleſs God who hath brought thee back. And now run the race which is ſet before thee,

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in the royal way of univerſal love. Take heed, leſt thou be either wavering in thy judgment, or ſtraitened in thy bowels. But keep an even pace, rooted in the faith once delivered to the ſaints, and grounded in love, in true Catholic love, till thou art ſwallowed up in love for ever and ever.

SERMON XL.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

PHIL. iii. 12.

Not as tho' I had already attained, either were already perfect.

1. THERE is scarce any expression in holy writ, which has given more offence than this. The word *perfect* is what many cannot bear. The very sound of it is an abomination to them. And whosoever *preaches perfection* (as the phrase is) *i. e.* asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being accounted by them, worse than a Heathen man or a Publican.

2. And hence some have advised, wholly to lay aside the use of those expressions: "because they have given so great offence." But are they not found in the oracles of God? If so, by what authority, can any messenger of God lay them aside, even tho' all men should be offended? We have not so learned Christ; neither may we thus give place to the devil. Whatsoever God hath spoken, that will we speak, whether

ther men will hear, or whether they will forbear: knowing that then alone can any minister of Christ be *pure from the blood of all men*, when he hath *not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God.*

3. We may not therefore lay these expressions aside, seeing they are the words of God, and not of man. But we may, and ought to explain the meaning of them; that those who are sincere of heart, may not err to the right-hand or to the left, from the mark of the prize of their high calling. And this is the more needful to be done, because in the verse already repeated, the apostle speaks of himself as not perfect: *not*, saith he, *as tho' I were already perfect.* And yet immediately after, in the fifteenth verse, he speaks of himself, yea and many others, as perfect. *Let us*, saith he, *as many as be perfect, be thus minded.*

4. In order therefore to remove the difficulty arising from this seeming contradiction, as well as to give light to them who are pressing forward to the mark, and that those who are lame be not turned out of the way, I shall endeavour to shew.

First, In what sense Christians are *not*, and,
Secondly, In what sense they are *perfect*.

I. 1. In the first place I shall endeavour to shew, in what sense Christians are *not perfect*. And both from experience and scripture it ap-

pears, firſt, that they are not perfect in knowledge: they are not *ſo* perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance. They know, it may be in common with other men, many things relating to the preſent world; and they know, with regard to the world to come, the general truths which God hath revealed. They know likewiſe (what *the natural man receiveth not:* for theſe things *are ſpiritually diſcerned) what manner of love it is, wherewith the Father hath loved them, that they ſhould be called the ſons of God:* they know *the mighty working of his Spirit* in their hearts, and the wiſdom of his providence, directing all their paths, and cauſing all things to work together for their good. Yea, they know in every circumſtance of life, what the Lord requireth of them, and how *to keep a conſcience void of offence both toward God and toward man.*

2. But innumerable are the things which they know not. *Touching the Almighty himſelf, they cannot ſearch him out to perfection. Lo, theſe are but a part of his ways; but the thunder of his power, who can underſtand?* They cannot underſtand, I will not ſay, how *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and theſe three are one*; or how the eternal Son of God *took upon himſelf the form of a ſervant:* but not any one attribute, not any one circumſtance of the divine nature. Neither is it for them *to know the times and ſeaſons*, when God

God will work his great works upon the earth; no, not even thoſe which he hath in part revealed, by his ſervants and prophets, ſince the world began. Much leſs do they know, when God having *accompliſhed the number of his elect will haſten his kingdom:* when *the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat.*

3. They know not the reaſons even of many of his preſent diſpenſations with the ſons of men: but are conſtrained to reſt here, tho' *clouds and darkneſs are round about him, righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his ſeat.* Yea, often with regard to his dealings with themſelves doth their Lord ſay unto them, *What I do, thou knoweſt not now; but thou ſhalt know hereafter.* And how little do they know, of what is ever before them, of even the viſible works of his hands? How *he ſpreadeth the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing?* How he unites all the parts of this vaſt machine by a ſecret chain which cannot be broken? So great is the ignorance, ſo very little the knowledge of even the beſt of men.

4. No one then is ſo perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance. Nor, ſecondly, from miſtake, which indeed is almoſt an unavoidable conſequence of it; ſeeing thoſe who *know but in part*, are ever liable to err, touching the things which they know not. 'Tis true, the children of God do not miſtake, as to the things

things essential to salvation. They do not *put darkness for light, or light for darkness*, neither *seek death in the error of their life.* For they are *taught of God*, and the way which he teaches them, the way of holiness is so plain, that *the wayfaring man, tho' a fool, need not err therein.* But in things unessential to salvation, they do err, and that frequently. The best and wisest of men are frequently mistaken, even with regard to facts: believing those things not to have been, which really were, or those to have been done, which were not. Or suppose they are not mistaken as to the fact itself, they may be, with regard to its circumstances; believing them, or many of them, to have been quite different, from what in truth they were. And hence cannot but arise many farther mistakes. Hence they may believe either past or present actions, which were, or are evil, to be good; and such as were, or are good to be evil. Hence also they may judge, not according to truth, with regard to the characters of men: and that not only by supposing good men to be better, or wicked men to be worse than they are; but by believing them to have been, or to be good men, who were, or are very wicked: or, perhaps, those to have been, or to be wicked men, who were, or are holy and unreprovable.

5. Nay, with regard to the holy scriptures themselves, as careful as they are to avoid it, the best of men are liable to mistake, and do mis-

take day by day: especially, with respect to those parts thereof, which less immediately relate to practice. Hence even the children of God are not agreed, as to the interpretation of many places in holy writ: nor is their difference of opinion any proof that they are not the children of God on either side. But it is a proof, that we are no more to expect any living man, to be *infallible* than to be *omniscient*.

6. If it be objected to what has been observed under this and the preceding head, that St. *John* speaking to his brethren in the faith, says, *Ye have an unction from the holy one, and know all things*, 1 John ii. 20. The answer is plain, "Ye know all things that are needful for your soul's health." That the apostle never designed to extend this farther, that he could not speak it in an absolute sense, is clear first from hence, that otherwise he would describe the disciple as *above his master*; seeing Christ himself, as man, knew not all things.—*Of that hour*, saith he, *knoweth no man, no not the Son, but the Father only*. It is clear, secondly, from the apostle's own words that follow, *These things have I written unto you concerning them that deceive you*: as well as from his frequently repeated caution, *Let no man deceive you*; which had been altogether needless, had not those very persons, who had that unction from the Holy One been liable not to ignorance only; but to mistake also.

7. Even

7. Even Christians therefore are not *so* perfect, as to be free either from ignorance or error. We may, thirdly, add: nor from infirmities. Only let us take care to understand this word aright. Only let us not give that soft title to known sins, as the manner of some is. So, one man tell us, "Every man has his infirmity, "and mine is drunkenness:" another has the infirmity of uncleanness; another that of taking God's holy name in vain. And yet another has the infirmity of calling his brother, *Thou fool*, or returning *railing for railing*. It is plain, that all you who thus speak, if ye repent not, shall with your infirmities, go quick into hell. But I mean hereby, not only those which are properly termed *boldly infirmities*, but all those inward or outward imperfections, which are not of a moral nature. Such are weakness or slowness of understanding, dullness or confusedness of apprehension, incoherency of thought, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such (to mention no more of this kind) is the want of a ready or retentive memory. Such in another kind are, those which are commonly in some measure consequent upon these: namely, slowness of speech, impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation: to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. These are the infirmities which are found in the best of men, in a

larger

larger or ſmaller proportion. And from theſe none can hope to be perfectly freed, till the ſpirit returns to God that gave it.

8. Nor can we expect till then, to be wholly free from temptation. Such perfection belongeth not to this life. It is true, there are thoſe who being given up to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs, ſcarce perceive the temptations which they reſiſt not, and ſo ſeem to be without temptation. There are alſo many whom the wiſe enemy of ſouls ſeeing to be faſt aſleep in the dead form of godlineſs, will not tempt to groſs ſin, leſt they ſhould awake, before they drop into everlaſting burnings. I know, there are alſo children of God, who being now *juſtified freely*, having found *redemption in the blood of Chriſt*, for the preſent feel no temptation. God hath ſaid to their enemies, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my children no harm.* And for this ſeaſon, it may be for weeks or months, he cauſeth them to *ride on high places*, he beareth them as on eagles wings, above all the fiery darts of the wicked one. But this ſtate will not laſt always, as we may learn from that ſingle conſideration, that the Son of God himſelf, in the days of his fleſh, was tempted even to the end of his life. Therefore ſo let his ſervant expect to be; for *it is enough that he be as his maſter.*

9. Chriſtian perfection therefore does not imply (as ſome men ſeem to have imagined) an exemption either from ignorance or miſtake, or infirmities

infirmities or temptations. Indeed it is only another term for holineſs. They are two names for the ſame thing. Thus, every one that is holy, is in the ſcripture ſenſe, perfect. Yet we may, laſtly, obſerve, that neither in this reſpect is there any abſolute perfection on earth. There is no *perfection of degrees*, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increaſe. So that how much ſoever any man has attained, or in how high a degree ſoever he is perfect, he hath ſtill need to *grow in grace*, and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Saviour.

II.) 1. In what ſenſe then are Chriſtians perfect? This is what I ſhall endeavour, in the ſecond place to ſhew. But it ſhould be premiſed, that there are ſeveral ſtages in Chriſtian life as in natural: ſome of the children of God being but new-born babes; others having attained to more maturity. And accordingly St. *John*, in his firſt epiſtle (c. ii. 12, *&c.*) applies himſelf ſeverally, to thoſe he terms little children, thoſe he ſtiles young men, and thoſe whom he intitles fathers. *I write unto you, little children*, ſaith the apoſtle, *becauſe your ſins are forgiven:* becauſe thus far you have attained, being *juſtified freely*, you *have peace with God, thro' Jeſus Chriſt. I write unto you, young men, becauſe ye have overcome the wicked one*; or (as he afterwards addeth) *becauſe ye are ſtrong, and the word of God abideth*

abideth in you. Ye have quenched the fiery darts of the wicked one, the doubts and fears, wherewith he disturbed your first peace, and the witness of God that your sins are forgiven, now *abideth in your heart. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.* Ye have known both the Father and the Son, and the Spirit of Christ in your inmost soul. Ye are *perfect men, being grown up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

2. It is of these chiefly I speak in the latter part of this discourse. For these only are perfect Christians. But even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect, or *born of God* (an expression taken also in divers senses) as first, not to commit sin. If any doubt of this privilege of the sons of God, the question is not to be decided by abstract reasonings, which may be drawn out into an endless length, and leave the point just as it was before. Neither is it to be determined by the experience of this or that particular person. Many may suppose they do not commit sin, when they do: but this proves nothing either way. *To the law and to the testimony* we appeal. *Let God be true, and every man a liar.* By his word will we abide, and that alone. Hereby we ought to be judged.

3. Now the word of God plainly declares, that even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, *do not continue in sin*; that they cannot *live any longer therein* (Rom. vi.

1, 2,)

1, 2.) that they are *planted together in the likeneſs of the death of Chriſt.* (verſe 5.) That their *old man is crucified with him, the body of ſin being deſtroyed, ſo that thenceforth they do not ſerve ſin:* that *being dead with Chriſt, they are freed from ſin* (verſes 6, 7.) That they are *dead unto ſin,* and *alive unto God* (verſe 11.) That *ſin hath no more dominion over them,* who are *not under the law, but under grace*; but that theſe *being free from ſin, are become the ſervants of righteouſneſs,* verſes 14, 18.

4. The very leaſt which can be implied in theſe words, is, that the perſons ſpoken of therein, namely, all real Chriſtians or believers in Chriſt, are made free from outward ſin. And the ſame freedom which St. *Paul* here expreſſes in ſuch variety of phraſes, St. *Peter* expreſſes in that one (1 *Pet.* iv. 1, 2.) *He that hath ſuffered in the fleſh, hath ceaſed from ſin,—that he no longer ſhould live—to the deſires of men, but to the will of God.* For this *ceaſing from ſin,* if it be interpreted in the loweſt ſenſe, as regarding only the outward behaviour, muſt denote the ceaſing from the outward act, from any outward tranſgreſſion of the law.

5. But moſt expreſs are the well known words of St. *John,* in the third chapter of his firſt epiſtle, verſe the eighth, *&c. He that committeth ſin is of the devil: for the devil ſinneth from the beginning. For this purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the devil.*

devil. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin. For his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. And those in the fifth, verse 18. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

6. Indeed it is said, this means only, he sinneth not *wilfully*; or he doth not commit sin *habitually*; or, *not as other men do*; or, *not as he did before.* But by whom is this said? By St. *John?* No. There is no such word in the text: nor in the whole chapter; nor in all this epistle; nor in any part of his writings whatsoever. Why then, the best way to answer a bold assertion is, simply to deny it. And if any man can prove it from the word of God, let him bring forth his strong reasons.

7. And a sort of reason there is, which has been frequently brought to support these strange assertions, drawn from the examples recorded in the word of God, "What say they, did not *Abraham* himself commit sin, prevaricating and denying his wife? Did not *Moses* commit sin, when he provoked God, *at the waters of strife?* Nay, to produce one for all, did not even *David, the man after God's own heart*, commit sin, in the matter of *Uriah* the *Hittite*, even murder and adultery?" It is most sure he did. All this is true. But what is it you would infer from hence? It may be granted, *first*, that *David*, in the

the general courſe of his life, was one of the holieſt men among the *Jews*. And, *ſecondly*, that the holieſt men among the *Jews did ſometimes commit ſin*. But if you would hence infer, that *all Chriſtians do, and muſt commit ſin, as long as they live:* this conſequence we utterly deny. It will never follow from thoſe premiſſes.

8. Thoſe who argue thus, ſeem never to have conſidered that declaration of our Lord (*Matth.* xi. 11.) *Verily I ſay unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not riſen a greater than John the Baptiſt. Notwithſtanding, he that is leaſt in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.* I fear indeed there are ſome who have imagined *the kingdom of heaven* here, to mean the kingdom of glory: As if the Son of God had juſt diſcovered to us, that the leaſt glorified ſaint in heaven is greater than any man upon earth! To mention this is ſufficiently to refute it. There can therefore no doubt be made but *the kingdom of heaven* here, (as in the following verſe, where it is ſaid to be *taken by force*) or, *the kingdom of God*, as St. *Luke* expreſſes it, is that kingdom of God on earth, whereunto all true believers in Chriſt, all real Chriſtians belong. In theſe words then our Lord declares two things. *Firſt*, That before his coming in the fleſh, among all the children of men, there had not been one greater than *John the Baptiſt:* whence it evidently follows, that neither *Abraham*, *David*, nor any *Jew* was greater than *John*. Our Lord,

ſecondly,

secondly, declares, that he which is least in the kingdom of God (in that kingdom which he came to set up on earth, and which *the violent* now began *to take by force*) is greater than he. Not *a greater prophet* (as some have interpreted the word) for this is palpably false in fact. But greater in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Therefore we cannot measure the privileges of real Christians, by those formerly given to the *Jews*. *Their ministration* (or dispensation) we allow *was glorious*; but ours *exceeds in glory*. So that whosoever would bring down the *Christian* dispensation to the *Jewish* standard, whosoever gleans up the examples of weakness, recorded in the law and the prophets, and thence infers, that they who have *put on Christ*, are indued with no greater strength, doth *greatly err, neither knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*.

9. "But are there not assertions in scripture "which prove the same thing, if it cannot be "inferred from those examples? Does not the "scripture say expressly, *Even a just man sinneth "seven times a day?*" I answer, No. The scripture says no such thing. There is no such text in all the bible. That which seems to be intended is the sixteenth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of *the Proverbs:* the words of which are these, *A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again*. But this is quite another thing. For, *first*, the words *a day*, are not in the text.

So

So that if a juſt man falls ſeven times in his life, it is as much as is affirmed here. *Secondly*, here is no mention of *falling into ſin* at all; what is here mentioned is, *falling into temporal affliction*. this plainly appears from the verſe before, the words of which are theſe: *Lay not wait, O wicked man, againſt the dwelling of the righteous; ſpoil not his reſting-place.* It follows, *For a juſt man falleth ſeven times, and riſeth up again: but the wicked ſhall fall into miſchief.* As if he had ſaid, "God will deliver him out of his trouble. But when thou falleſt, there ſhall be none to deliver thee."

10. But however in other places, continue the objectors, *Solomon* does aſſert plainly, *There is no man that ſinneth not* (1 *Kings* viii. 46. 2 *Chron.* vi. 36.) yea, *there is not a juſt man upon earth that doth good, and ſinneth not* (Eccleſ. vii. 20.) I anſwer, without doubt, thus it was, in the days of *Solomon*. Yea, thus it was, from *Adam* to *Moſes*, from *Moſes* to *Solomon*, and from *Solomon* to Chriſt. There was *then* no man that ſinned not. Even from the day that ſin entered into the world, there was not a juſt man upon earth that did good, and ſinned not, *until the* Son of God was manifeſted *to take away our ſins*. It is unqueſtionably true, that *the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a ſervant*. And that *even ſo* they (all the holy men of old. who were under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation) *were* during that infant-ſtate of the church, *in bondage*

under

under the elements of the world. But when the fulneſs of the time was come, God ſent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of ſons; that they might receive that *grace which is now made manifeſt by the appearing of our Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt, who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life and immortality to light thro' the goſpel*, (2 Tim. i. 10.) Now therefore they *are no more ſervants, but ſons*. So that whatſoever was the caſe of thoſe under the law, we may ſafely affirm with St. *John*, that ſince the goſpel was given, *He that is born of God, ſinneth not.*

11. It is of great importance to obſerve, and that more carefully than is commonly done, the wide difference there is between the *Jewiſh* and the *Chriſtian* diſpenſation: and that ground of it which the ſame apoſtle aſſigns in the ſeventh chapter of his goſpel, verſe 38, *&c.* After he had there related thoſe words of our bleſſed Lord, *He that believeth on me, as the ſcripture hath ſaid, out of his belly ſhall flow rivers of living water*, he immediately ſubjoins, *This ſpake he of the ſpirit,* ὃ ἔμελλον λαμβάνειν οἱ πιστεύοντες εἰς αὐτόν, *which they who ſhould believe on him, were afterwards to receive. For the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given, becauſe that Jeſus was not yet glorified.* Now the apoſtle cannot mean here (as ſome have taught) that the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given. For this was given; our Lord had given it to all his apoſtles, when

he firſt ſent them forth to preach the goſpel. He then gave them *power over unclean ſpirits to caſt them out*; power *to heal the ſick*, yea, *to raiſe the dead*. But the Holy Ghoſt was not yet given in his ſanctifying graces, as he was after Jeſus was glorified. It was then when *he aſcended up on high and led captivity captive*, that he *received thoſe gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them*. And *when the day of Pentecoſt was fully come*, then firſt it was, that they who *waited for the promiſe of the Father*, were made more than conquerors over ſin, by the Holy Ghoſt given unto them.

12. That this great ſalvation from ſin was not given till Jeſus was glorified, St. *Peter* alſo plainly teſtifies; where ſpeaking of his *brethren in the fleſh*, as now *receiving the end of their faith, the ſalvation of their ſouls*, he adds, (1 *Pet.* i. 9, 10, &c.) *Of which ſalvation the prophets have enquired and ſearched diligently, who propheſied of the grace* (i. e. the gracious diſpenſation) *that ſhould come unto you: ſearching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Chriſt which was in them did ſignify, when it teſtified before hand the ſufferings of Chriſt and the glory* (the glorious ſalvation) *that ſhould follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themſelves, but unto us they did miniſter, the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the goſpel unto you, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven* (viz. at the day of Pentecoſt, and ſo unto all generations,

into

into the hearts of all true believers.) On this ground even *the grace which was brought unto them by the revelation of Jesus Christ*, the apostle might well build that strong exhortation, *Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind,—as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

13. Those who have duly considered these things must allow, that the privileges of Christians, are in no wise to be measured by what the Old Testament records concerning those who were under the *Jewish* dispensation: seeing the fulness of times is now come; the Holy Ghost is now given: the great salvation of God is brought unto men, by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven is now set up on earth: concerning which the Spirit of God declared of old (so far is *David* from being the pattern or standard of Christian perfection) *He that is feeble among them at that day, shall be as* David: *and the house of* David *shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them* (Zech. xii. 8.)

14. If therefore you would prove that the apostle's words, *he that is born of God sinneth not*, are not to be understood, according to their plain, natural, obvious meaning, it is from the New Testament you are to bring your proofs: else you will fight as one that beateth the air. And the first of these which is usually brought is taken from the examples recorded in the New Testament. "The apostles themselves (it is

ſaid) committed ſin: nay the greateſt of them. *Peter* and *Paul:* St. *Paul*, by his ſharp contention with *Barnabas*, and St. *Peter*, by his diſſimulation at *Antioch*." Well; ſuppoſe both *Peter* and *Paul* did then commit ſin: what is it you would infer from hence? That *all the other apoſtles* committed ſin ſometimes? There is no ſhadow of proof in this. Or, would you thence infer, that *all the other Chriſtians* of the apoſtolic age committed ſin? Worſe and worſe; this is ſuch an inference as one would imagine a man in his ſenſes could never have thought of. Or, will you argue thus? "If two of the apoſtles did once commit ſin, then *all other Chriſtians, in all ages*, do, and will commit ſin as long as they live." Alas, my brother! a child of common underſtanding, would be aſhamed of ſuch reaſoning as this. Leaſt of all can you with any colour of argument infer, "That any man *muſt* commit ſin at all." No; God forbid we ſhould thus ſpeak. No neceſſity of ſinning was laid upon *them*. The grace of God was ſurely ſufficient for them. And it *is* ſufficient for *us* at this day. With the temptation which fell on *them*, there *was* a way to eſcape: as there *is* to every ſoul of man in every temptation. So that whoſoever is tempted to any ſin, *need* not yield; for no man is tempted above that he is able to bear.

15. "But St. *Paul* beſought the Lord thrice, and yet he could not eſcape from his temptation."

Let

Let us consider his own words literally translated. *There was given to me, a thorn, to the flesh, an angel, or messenger of Satan, to buffet me. Touching this I besought the Lord thrice, that it* or *he might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee. For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in these my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses,—for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

16. As this scripture is one of the strong-holds of the patrons of sin, it may be proper to weigh it throughly. Let it be observed then, *first*, It does by no means appear, that this thorn, whatsoever it was, occasioned St. *Paul* to commit sin: much less laid him under any necessity of doing so. Therefore, from hence it can never be proved that any Christian *must* commit sin. *Secondly*, The antient fathers inform us, it was bodily pain: a violent head-ach, saith *Tertullian* (de Pudic.) to which both *Chrysostom* and St. *Jerom* agree. St. *Cyprian* * expresses it a little more generally in those terms, *Many and grievous torments of the flesh and of the body.* † *Thirdly*, To this exactly agree the apostle's own words, *A thorn to the flesh, to smite, beat, or buffet me. My strength is made perfect in weakness.* Which same words occur no less than four times in

 these

* *De mortalitate.*

† *Carnis & corporis multa ac: gravia tormenta.*

these two verses only. But, *fourthly*, Whatsoever it was, it could not be either inward or outward sin. It could no more be inward stirrings, than outward expressions, of pride, anger, or lust. This is manifest beyond all possible exception, from the words that immediately follow, *Most gladly will I glory in these my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me.* What? Did he glory in pride, in anger, in lust? Was it through these *weaknesses*, that the strength of Christ rested upon him? He goes on; *Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses*; *for when I am weak, than am I strong*; i. e. When I am weak *in body*, then am I strong *in spirit*. But will any man dare to say, when I am weak by pride or lust, then am I strong in spirit? I call you all to record this day, who find the strength of Christ resting upon you, can *you* glory in anger, or pride, or lust? Can *you* take pleasure in *these* infirmities? Do *these* weaknesses make *you* strong? Would you not leap into hell, were it possible, to escape them? Even by yourselves then judge, whether the apostle could glory, and take pleasure in them? Let it be, *lastly*, observed, That this thorn was given to St. *Paul above fourteen years* before he wrote this epistle: which itself was wrote several years before he finished his course. So that he had after this a long course to run, many battles to fight, many victories to gain, and great increase to receive in all the gifts of God, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Therefore

Therefore from any ſpiritual weakneſs (if ſuch had been) which he *at that time* felt, we could by no means infer, that he was never made ſtrong, that *Paul*, the aged, the Father in Chriſt, ſtill laboured under the ſame weakneſſes; that he was in no higher ſtate till the day of his death. From all which it appears, that this inſtance of St. *Paul* is quite foreign to the queſtion, and does in no wiſe claſh with the aſſertion of St. *John*, *He that is born of God, ſinneth not.*

17. "But does not St. *James*, directly contradict this? His words are, *In many things we offend all*, ch. iii. ver. 2. And is not *offending* the ſame as *committing ſin?*" In this place I allow it is. I allow *the perſons here ſpoken of* did commit ſin, yea, that they all committed *many* ſins. But who are *the perſons here ſpoken of?* Why, thoſe *many maſters* or *teachers*, whom God had not ſent (probably the ſame *vain men* who taught that *faith without works*, which is ſo ſharply reproved in the preceding chapter.) Not the apoſtle himſelf, nor any real Chriſtian. That in the word *we* (uſed by a figure of ſpeech, common in all other, as well as the inſpired writings) the apoſtle could not poſſibly include himſelf, or any other true believer, appears evidently, *firſt*, From the ſame word, in the ninth verſe; *Therewith* (ſaith he) *bleſs* we *God, and therewith curſe* we *men. Out of the ſame mouth proceedeth bleſſing and curſing.* True; but not out of the mouth of the apoſtle, nor of any one

who is in Chriſt a new creature. *Secondly*, From the verſe immediately preceding the text, and manifeſtly connected with it. *My brethren, be not many maſters* (or teachers) *knowing that* we *ſhall receive the greater condemnation: for in many things* we *offend all:* We! Who? Not the apoſtles, nor true believers; but they who knew they ſhould *receive the greater condemnation*, becauſe of thoſe many offences. But this could not be ſpoke of the apoſtle himſelf, or of any who trod in his ſteps; ſeeing *there is no condemnation for them, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit.* Nay, *thirdly*, The very verſe itſelf proves, that *we offend all*, cannot be ſpoken, either of all men, or of all Chriſtians; for in it there immediately follows the mention of a man who *offends not*, as the *we* firſt mentioned did: from whom therefore he is profeſſedly contradiſtinguiſhed, and pronounced, *a perfect man.*

18. So clearly does St. *James*, explain himſelf, and fix the meaning of his own words. Yet leſt any one ſhould ſtill remain in doubt, St. *John*, writing many years after St. *James*, puts the matter intirely out of diſpute, by the expreſs declarations above recited. But here a freſh difficulty may ariſe. How ſhall we reconcile St. *John* with himſelf? In one place he declares, "*Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin.*" And, again, *We know that he which is born of God, ſinneth not.* And yet in another he ſaith, *If we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and*

and the truth is not in us. And again, *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

19. As great a difficulty as this may at first appear, it vanishes away if we observe, *first*, That the tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth: *If we say we have no sin*, in the former, being explained by, *If we say we have not sinned*, in the latter verse. *Secondly*, That the point under present consideration is not, whether we *have or have not sinned heretofore*: and neither of these verses assert, that we *do sin, or commit sin* now. *Thirdly*, That the ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth; *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*: as if he had said, "I have before affirmed, the *blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* But let no man say, I need it not: I have no sin to be cleansed from. If we say *that we have no sin, that we have not sinned*, we deceive ourselves and make God a liar. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, not only to forgive our sins, but also to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, that we may go and sin no more."

20. St. *John* therefore is well consistent with himself, as well as with the other holy writers; as will yet more evidently appear, if we place all his assertions touching this matter in one view. He declares, *first*, The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. *Secondly*, No

man can say, I have not sinned, I have no sin to be cleansed from. *Thirdly*, But God is ready both to forgive our past sins, and to save us from them for the time to come. *Fourthly*, *These things I write unto you*, saith the apostle, *that you may not sin: but if any man should sin*, or *have sinned* (as the word might be rendered) he need not continue in sin, seeing *we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous*. Thus far all is clear. But lest any doubt should remain, in a point of so vast importance, the apostle resumes this subject in the third chapter, and largely explains his own meaning. *Little children*, saith he, *let no man deceive you* (as tho' I had given any encouragement to those that continue in sin.) *He that doth righteousness, is righteous even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.* (verses 7,—10) Here the point, which till then might possibly have admitted of some doubt in weak minds, is purposely settled by the last of the inspired writers, and decided in the clearest manner. In conformity therefore both to the doctrine of St. *John*, and to the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion,

ſion, " A Chriſtian is ſo far perfect, as not to commit ſin."

21. This is the glorious privilege of every Chriſtian, yea, tho' he be but *a babe in Chriſt*. But it is only of thoſe who *are ſtrong* in the Lord, *and have overcome the wicked one*, or rather of thoſe who *have known him that is from the beginning*, that it can be affirmed they are in ſuch a ſenſe perfect; as, *ſecondly*, to be freed from evil thoughts, and evil tempers. *Firſt*, from evil or ſinful thoughts. But here let it be obſerved, that thoughts concerning evil, are not always evil thoughts: that a thought concerning ſin, and a ſinful thought, are widely different. A man, for inſtance may think of a murder which another has committed, and yet this is no evil or ſinful thought. So our bleſſed Lord himſelf, doubtleſs thought of, or underſtood the things ſpoken by the devil, when he ſaid, *All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me*. Yet had he no evil or ſinful thought, nor indeed was capable of having any. And even hence it follows, that neither have real Chriſtians. For *every one that is perfect is as his Maſter*. (Luke vi. 40.) Therefore, if he was free from evil or ſinful thoughts, ſo are they likewiſe.

22. And indeed, whence ſhould evil thoughts proceed, in the ſervant who is *as his Maſter?* *out of the heart of man* (if at all) *proceed evil thoughts* (Mark vii. 21.) If therefore his heart be no longer evil, then evil thoughts can no

longer proceed out of it. If the tree were corrupt, so would be the fruit; but the tree is good. The fruit therefore is good also. (*Matth.* xii. 33.) Our Lord himself bearing witness, *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit*, as *a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit*, Matt. vii. 17, 18.

23. The same happy privilege of real Christians, St. *Paul* asserts from his own experience. *The weapons of our warfare*, saith he, *are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations* (or reasonings rather, for so the word λογισμὸς signifies: all the reasonings of pride and unbelief against the declarations, promises or gifts of God) *and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*; *and bringing into captivity* every thought *to the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 5, &c.

24. And as Christians indeed, are freed from evil thoughts, so are they, *secondly*, from evil tempers. This is evident from the above-mentioned declaration of our Lord himself: *The disciple is not above his Master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.* He had been delivering just before some of the sublimest doctrines of Christianity, and some of the most grievous to flesh and blood. *I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you: and unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other.* Now these he well knew the world would not receive:

receive: and therefore immediately adds, *Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?* As if he had said, "Do not confer with flesh and blood touching these things, with men void of spiritual discernment, the eyes of whose understanding God hath not opened, lest they and you perish together." In the next verse he removes the two grand objections, with which these wise fools meet us at every turn, "These things are too grievous to be borne," or, "They are too high to be attained:" saying, *The disciple is not above his Master:* therefore, if I have suffered, be content to tread in my steps. And doubt ye not then, but I will fulfil my word: *for every one that is perfect, shall be as his Master.* But his Master was free from all sinful tempers. So therefore is his disciple, even every real Christian.

25. Every one of these can say with St. *Paul*, *I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:* words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward, as well as from outward sin. This is expressed both negatively, *I live not:* my evil nature, the body of sin is destroyed: and positively, *Christ liveth in me*, and therefore all that is holy, and just, and good. Indeed both these, *Christ liveth in me*, and *I live not*, are inseparably connected. For *what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?*

26. He

26. He therefore who liveth in true believers, hath *purified their hearts by faith:* insomuch that *every one that hath Christ in him, the hope of glory, purifieth himself even as he is pure.* (1 John iii. 3.) He is purified from pride; for Christ was lowly of heart. He is pure from self-will, or desire; for Christ desired only to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word; for Christ was meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering. I say, in the common sense of the word: for all anger is not evil. We read of our Lord himself (*Mark* iii. 5.) that he once *looked round with anger.* But with what kind of anger? The next word shews; συλλυπούμενος, being *at the same time grieved for the hardness of their hearts.* So then he was *angry at the sin*, and in the same moment *grieved for the sinners.* Angry or displeased *at the offence*; but sorry, *for the offenders.* With anger, yea, hatred, he looked upon *the thing*; with grief and love upon the *persons.* Go thou that art perfect, and do likewise. *Be thus angry, and* thou *sinnest not*: feeling a displacency at every offence against God; but only love and tender compassion to the offender.

27. Thus doth Jesus *save his people from their sins:* and not only from outward sins, but also from the sins of their hearts; from evil thoughts and from evil tempers. "True, say some; we "shall thus be saved from our sins: but not till death, not in this world." But how are we to reconcile

reconcile this with the expreſs words of St. *John?* *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldneſs in the day of judgment, becauſe as he is, ſo are we* in this world. The apoſtle here beyond all contradiction ſpeaks of himſelf and other living Chriſtians, of whom (as tho' he had foreſeen this very evaſion, and ſet himſelf to overturn it from the foundation) he flatly affirms, that not only at, or after death, but *in this world*, they are as their Maſter, 1 *John* iv. 17.

28. Exactly agreeable to this are his words in the firſt chapter of this epiſtle, (verſe 6, *&c.*) *God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all. If we walk in the light, we have fellowſhip one with another, and the blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son cleanſeth us from all ſin.* And again, *If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.* Now it is evident, the apoſtle here alſo ſpeaks of a deliverance wrought *in this world.* For he ſaith not, *the blood of Chriſt will cleanſe* (at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment) but it *cleanſeth* (at the time preſent) *us* (living Chriſtians) *from all ſin.* And it is equally evident, that if *any ſin* remain, we are not cleanſed from *all ſin:* if *any* unrighteouſneſs remain in the ſoul, it is not cleanſed from all unrighteouſneſs. Neither let any ſinner againſt his own ſoul ſay, that this relates to juſtification only, or the cleanſing us from the guilt of ſin; *firſt*, Becauſe this is confounding together what the apoſtle clearly diſtinguiſhes;

tinguiſhes; who mentions firſt, *to forgive us our ſins*, and then *to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs*. *Secondly*, Becauſe this is aſſerting juſtification by works in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe poſſible: it is making all inward, as well as outward holineſs, neceſſarily previous to juſtification. For if the cleanſing here ſpoken of is no other than the cleanſing us from the guilt of ſin, then we are not cleanſed from guilt; *i. e.* are not juſtified, unleſs on condition of *walking in the light, as he is in the light*. It remains then, that Chriſtians are ſaved in this world from all ſin, from all unrighteouſneſs: that they are now in ſuch a ſenſe perfect, as not to commit ſin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers.

29. Thus hath the Lord fulfilled the things he ſpake by his holy prophets, which have been ſince the world began: by *Moſes* in particular, ſaying (*Deut.* xxx. 6.) *I will circumciſe thine heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul*; *by* David crying out, *Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right ſpirit within me*: and moſt remarkably by *Ezekiel*, in thoſe words, *Then will I ſprinkle clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean*; *from all* your *filthineſs, and from* all *your idols will I cleanſe you. A new heart alſo will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you, and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep my judgments and do them.—Ye ſhall be my people, and I will be your God. I will alſo ſave you from all your uncleanneſſes.*

neſſes.—Thus ſaith the Lord your God, in the day that I ſhall have cleanſed you from all your iniquities—the Heathen ſhall know that I the Lord build the ruined places,—I the Lord have ſpoken it,—and I will do it, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, *&c.*

30. *Having therefore theſe promiſes dearly beloved*, both in the law and in the prophets, and having the prophetic word confirmed unto us in the goſpel, by our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles: *Let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God. Let us fear leſt* ſo many promiſes *being made us of entering into his reſt* (which he that hath entered into, *is ceaſed from his own works*) *any of us ſhould come ſhort of it. This one thing let us do*; *forgeting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, Let us preſs toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus:* crying unto him day and night, till we alſo are *delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the ſons of God.*

THE

THE PROMISE of SANCTIFICATION.

EZEK. xxxvi. 25, &c.

By the Rev. Mr. CHARLES WESLEY.

GOD *of all power, and truth, and grace,*
Which shall from age to age endure;
Whose word, when heaven and earth shall pass,
Remains, and stands for ever sure:

Calmly to thee my soul looks up,
And waits thy promises to prove;
The object of my stedfast hope,
The seal of thine eternal love.

That I thy mercy may proclaim,
That all mankind thy truth may see,
Hallow thy great and glorious name,
And perfect holiness in me.

Chose from the world if now I stand
Adorned in righteousness divine,
If brought unto the promis'd land,
I justly call the Saviour mine;

Perform the work thou hast begun,
My inmost soul to thee convert:
Love me, for ever, love thine own,
And sprinkle with thy blood my heart.

Thy

Thy sanctifying Spirit pour
To quench my thirst, and wash me clean;
Now, Father, let the gracious shower
Descend, and make me pure from sin.

Purge me from every sinful blot;
My idols all be cast aside:
Cleanse me from every evil thought;
From all the filth of self and pride.

Give me a new, a perfect heart,
From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;
The mind which was in Christ impart,
And let my Spirit cleave to thee.

O take this heart of stone away,
(Thy rule it doth not, cannot own)
In me no longer let it stay:
O take away this heart of stone.

The hatred of my carnal mind
Out of my flesh at once remove;
Give me a tender heart, resign'd,
And pure, and fill'd with faith and love.

Within me thy good Spirit place,
Spirit of health, and love, and power:
Plant in me thy victorious grace,
And sin shall never enter more.

Cause me to walk in Christ my way,
And I thy statutes shall fulfil;
In every point thy law obey,
And perfectly perform thy will.

Hast thou not said, who canst not lie,
That I thy law shall keep and do?
Lord, I believe, tho' men deny:
They all are false; but thou art true.

O that I now, from sin releas'd,
Thy word might to the utmost prove!
Enter into the promis'd rest,
The Canaan of thy perfect love!

There let me ever, ever dwell;
Be thou my God, and I will be
Thy servant: O set to thy seal;
Give me eternal life in thee.

From all remaining filth within
Let me in thee salvation have:
From actual, and from inbred sin,
My ransom'd soul persist to save.

Wash out my old orig'nal stain:
Tell me no more, it cannot be,
Demons or men! The Lamb was slain,
His blood was all pour'd out for me.

Sprinkle it, Jesu, on my heart!
One drop of thy all-cleansing blood
Shall make my sinfulness depart,
And fill me with the life of God.

Father, supply my every need:
Sustain the life thyself hast giv'n;
Call for the corn, the living bread,
The manna that comes down from heav'n.

The gracious fruits of righteouſneſs,
Thy bleſſing's unexhauſted ſtore,
In me abundantly increaſe:
Nor never let me hunger more.

Let me no more in deep complaint
" My leanneſs, O my leanneſs," cry!
Alone conſum'd with pining want,
Of all my Father's children I!

The painful thirſt, the fond deſire
Thy joyous preſence ſhall remove,
While my full ſoul doth ſtill require
The whole eternity of love.

Holy, and true, and righteous Lord,
I wait to prove thy perfect will:
Be mindful of thy gracious word,
And ſtamp me with thy Spirit's ſeal.

Thy faithful mercies let me find
In which thou cauſeſt me to truſt;
Give me thy meek and lowly mind,
And lay my ſpirit in the duſt.

Shew me how foul my heart hath been
When all renew'd by grace I am;
When thou haſt emptied me of ſin,
Shew me the fulneſs of my ſhame.

Open my faith's interior eye,
Diſplay thy glory from above;
And all I am ſhall ſink and die,
Loſt in aſtoniſhment and love.

Confound

Confound, o'erpower me with thy grace:
I would be by myself abhor'd;
(All might, all majesty, all praise,)
All glory be to Christ my Lord!

Now let me gain perfection's height!
Now let me in nothing fall!
Be less than nothing in thy sight,
And feel that Christ is all in all!

SERMON

SERMON XLI.

WANDERING THOUGHTS.

2 Cor. x. 4.

Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

1. BUT will God so *bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*, that no *wandering thought* will find a place in the mind, even while we remain in the body? So some have vehemently maintained: yea, have affirmed, that none are *perfected in love*, unless they are so far perfected in understanding, that all *wandering thoughts* are done away: unless not only every affection and temper, be holy, and just, and good, but every individual thought which arises in the mind, be wise and regular.

2. This is a question of no small importance. For how many of those who fear God, yea and love him, perhaps with all their heart, have been greatly distrest on this account? How many, by not understanding it right, have not only been distrest, but greatly hurt in their souls? Cast into unprofitable, yea, mischievous reasonings, such as slackened their motion towards God, and weakened

weakened them in running the race ſet before them. Nay many, thro' miſapprehenſions of this very thing, have caſt away the precious gift of God? They have been induced firſt to doubt of, and then to deny the work God had wrought in their ſouls; and hereby have grieved the Spirit of God, 'till he withdrew and left them in utter darkneſs.

3. How is it then, that amidſt the abundance of books which have been lately publiſhed almoſt on all ſubjects, we ſhould have none upon *wandering thoughts?* At leaſt none that will at all ſatisfy a calm and ſerious mind? In order to do this in ſome degree, I purpoſe to enquire

I. What are the ſeveral ſorts of wandering thoughts?
II. What are the general occaſions of them?
III. Which of them are ſinful, and which not?
IV. Which of them we may expect and pray to be delivered from?

I. 1. I purpoſe to enquire, firſt, What are the ſeveral ſorts of wandering thoughts? The particular ſorts are innumerable; but in general, they are of two ſorts, thoughts that wander from God, and thoughts that wander from the particular point we have in hand.

2. With regard to the former, all our thoughts are naturally of this kind. For they are continually wandering from God: we think nothing about

about him. God is not in all our thoughts: we are, one and all, as the apoſtle obſerves, *without God in the world.* We think of what we love: but we do not love God: therefore we think not of him. Or if we are now and then conſtrained to think of him for a time, yet as we have no pleaſure therein, nay rather, as theſe thoughts are not only inſipid, but diſtaſteful and irkſome to us, we drive them out as ſoon as we can, and return to what we love to think of. So that the world and the things of the world, what we ſhall eat, what we ſhall drink, what we ſhall put on: what we ſhall ſee, what we ſhall hear, what we ſhall gain: how we ſhall pleaſe our ſenſes or our imagination, takes up all our time, and engroſſes all our thought. So long therefore as we love the world, that is, ſo long as we are in our natural ſtate, all our thoughts, from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, are no other than wandering thoughts.

3. But many times we are not only *without God in the world*, but alſo fighting *againſt him*: as there is in every man by nature a *carnal mind which is enmity againſt God*: no wonder therefore that men abound with *unbelieving* thoughts: either ſaying in their hearts there is no God, or queſtioning, if not denying his power or wiſdom, his mercy, or juſtice, or holineſs. No wonder, that they ſo often doubt of his providence, at leaſt, of its extending to all events: or that even tho' they allow it, they ſtill entertain

murmuring or *repining* thoughts. Nearly related to these and frequently connected with them, are *proud* and *vain* imaginations. Again: sometimes they are taken up with *angry*, *malicious* or *revengeful* thoughts: at other times, with airy scenes of pleasure, whether of sense or imagination: whereby the earthy sensual mind, becomes more *earthy* and *sensual* still. Now by all these, they make flat war with God; these are *wandering thoughts* of the highest kind.

4. Widely different from these are the other sort of *wandering thoughts:* in which the heart does not wander from God, but the understanding wanders from the particular point it had then in view. For instance: I sit down to consider those words in the verse preceeding the text, *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty thro'* God. I think, "This ought to be the case with all that are called Christians. But how far is it otherwise? Look round into almost every part of what is termed the Christian world! What manner of weapons are these using? In what kind of warfare are they engaged,

"While men, like fiends, each other tear
In all the hellish rage of war?

See how *these Christians* love one another! Wherein are they preferable to Turks and Pagans? What abomination can be found among Mahometans or Heathens, which is not found among

Christians

Chriſtians alſo?" And thus my mind runs off, before I am aware, from one circumſtance to another. Now all theſe are in ſome ſenſe *wandering thoughts*. For altho' they do not wander from God, much leſs fight againſt him, yet they do wander from the particular point I had in view.

II. Such is the nature, ſuch are the ſorts (to ſpeak rather uſefully, than philoſophically) of wandering thoughts. But what are the general occaſions of them? This we are, in the ſecond place to conſider.

1. And it is eaſy to obſerve, that the occaſion of the former ſort of thoughts which oppoſe or wander from God, are in general, ſinful tempers. For inſtance. Why *is not* God *in all the thoughts*, in any of the thoughts of a natural man? For a plain reaſon: be he rich or poor, learned or unlearned, he is an atheiſt; (tho' not vulgarly ſo called) he neither knows nor loves God. Why are his thoughts continually wandering after the world? Becauſe he is an idolater. He does not indeed worſhip an image, or bow down to the ſtock of a tree: yet is he ſunk into equally damnable idolatry: he loves, that is, worſhips the world. He ſeeks happineſs in the things that are ſeen, in the pleaſures that periſh in the uſing. Why is it that his thoughts are perpetually wandering from the very end of his being, the knowledge of God in *Chriſt*? Becauſe he is an

unbeliever; becauſe he has no faith, or at leaſt, no more than a devil. So all theſe wandering thoughts eaſily and naturally ſpring from that evil root of unbelief.

2. The caſe is the ſame in other inſtances, pride, anger, revenge, vanity, luſt, covetouſneſs, every one of them occaſion thoughts ſuitable to their own nature. And ſo does every ſinful temper, of which the human mind is capable. The particulars it is hardly poſſible, nor is it needful to enumerate. It ſuffices to obſerve, that as many evil tempers as find a place in any ſoul, ſo many ways that ſoul will depart from God, by the worſt kind of wandering thoughts.

3. The occaſions of the latter kind of wandering thoughts, are exceeding various. Multitudes of them are occaſioned, by the *natural union* between the ſoul and body. How immediately and how deeply is the underſtanding affected by a *diſeaſed* body! Let but the blood move irregularly in the brain, and all regular thinking is at an end. *Raging madneſs* enſues, and then farewell to all evenneſs of thought. Yea, let only the ſpirits be hurried or agitated to a certain degree, and a temporary madneſs, a *delirium* prevents all ſettled thought. And is not the ſame irregularity of thought in a meaſure occaſioned by every *nervous diſorder*? So does *the corruptible body preſs down the ſoul, and cauſe it to muſe about many things*.

4. * But

4. * But does it only cauſe this in the time of ſickneſs, or preternatural diſorder? Nay, but more or leſs, at all times, even in a ſtate or perfect health. Let a man be ever ſo healthy, he will be more or leſs delirious, every four-and-twenty hours. For does he not *ſleep?* And while he ſleeps, is he not liable to *dream?* And who then is maſter of his own thoughts, or able to preſerve the order and conſiſtency of them? Who can then keep them fixt to any one point, or prevent their wandering from pole to pole?

5. * But ſuppoſe we are awake, are we always ſo awake, that we can ſteadily govern our thoughts? Are we not unavoidably expoſed to contrary extremes, by the very nature of this machine, the body? Sometimes we are too *heavy* too dull and languid, to purſue any chain of thought. Sometimes, on the other hand, we are too *lively*. The *imagination*, without leave, ſtarts to and fro, and carries us away, hither and thither, whether we will or no: and all this, from the merely natural motion of the ſpirits, or vibration of the nerves.

6. * Farther, How many wanderings of thought may ariſe, from thoſe various *aſſociations* of our ideas, which are made entirely without our knowledge, and independently on our choice? How theſe connexions are formed we cannot tell: but they are formed in a thouſand different manners. Nor is it in the power of the wiſeſt or holieſt of men, to break thoſe aſſociations, or to

prevent what is the neceſſary conſequence of them, and matter of daily obſervation. Let the fire but touch one end of the train, and it immediately runs on to the other.

7. * Once more. Let us fix our attention as ſtudiouſly as we are able on any ſubject, yet let either *pleaſure or pain* ariſe, eſpecially if it be intenſe, and it will demand our immediate attention, and attach our thought to itſelf. It will interrupt the ſteadieſt contemplation, and divert the mind from its favourite ſubject.

8. * Theſe occaſions of wandering thoughts lie within, are wrought into our very nature. But they will likewiſe naturally and neceſſarily ariſe, from the various impulſe of *outward objects*. Whatever ſtrikes upon the organ of ſenſe, the eye or ear, will raiſe a perception in the mind. And accordingly, whatever we ſee or hear, will break in upon our former train of thought. Every man therefore that does any thing in our ſight, or ſpeaks any thing in our hearing, occaſions our mind to wander more or leſs from the point it was thinking of before.

9. * And there is no queſtion but thoſe *evil ſpirits*, who are continually *ſeeking whom they may devour*, make uſe of all the foregoing occaſions, to hurry and diſtract our minds. Sometimes by one, ſometimes by another of theſe means, they will harraſs and perplex us, and ſo far as God permits, interrupt our thoughts, particularly when they are engaged on the beſt ſubjects. Nor

is

is this at all ſtrange: they well underſtand the very ſprings of thought, and know on which of the bodily organs, the imagination, the underſtanding, and every other faculty of the mind more immediately depends. And hereby they know, how by affecting thoſe organs, to affect the operations dependent on them. Add to this, that they can inject a thouſand thoughts, without any of the preceding means: it being as natural for ſpirit to act upon ſpirit, as for matter to act upon matter. Theſe things being conſidered, we cannot admire, that our thought ſo often wanders from any point which we have in view.

III. 1. What kind of wandering thoughts are ſinful, and what not, is the third thing to be inquired into. And firſt, all thoſe thoughts which wander from God, which leave him no room in our minds, are undoubtedly ſinful. For all theſe imply practical atheiſm, and by theſe we are without God in the world. And ſo much more are all thoſe which are contrary to God, which imply oppoſition or enmity to him. Such are all murmuring, diſcontented thoughts, which ſay in effect, We will not have thee to rule over us: all unbelieving thoughts, whether with regard to his being, his attributes, or his providence. I mean his *particular providence* over all things as well as all perſons in the univerſe: that *without* which *not a ſparrow falls to the ground*, by which *the hairs of our head are all*

numbered. For as to a *general providence* (vulgarly ſo called) contradiſtinguiſhed from a particular, it is only a decent, well-ſounding word, which means juſt nothing.

2. Again. All thoughts which ſpring from ſinful tempers, are undoubtedly ſinful. Such, for inſtance, are thoſe that ſpring from a revengeful temper, from pride, or luſt, or vanity. *An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.* Therefore if the tree be evil, ſo muſt the fruit be alſo.

3. And ſo muſt thoſe be, which either produce or feed any ſinful temper: thoſe which either give riſe to pride or vanity, to anger or love of the world, or confirm and increaſe theſe or any other unholy temper, paſſion, or affection. For not only whatever flows from evil is evil, but alſo whatever leads to it; whatever tends to alienate the ſoul from God, and to make or keep it *earthly*, *ſenſual*, and *deviliſh*.

4. Hence even thoſe thoughts which are occaſioned by weakneſs or diſeaſe, by the natural mechaniſm of the body, or by the laws of vital union, however innocent they may be in themſelves, do nevertheleſs become ſinful, when they either produce or cheriſh and increaſe in us any ſinful temper: ſuppoſe the deſire of the fleſh, the deſire of the eye, or the pride of life. In like manner the wandering thoughts which are occaſioned, by the words or actions of other men,

men, if they cauſe or feed any wrong diſpoſition, then commence ſinful. And the ſame we may obſerve of thoſe which are ſuggeſted or injected by the devil. When they miniſter to any earthly or deviliſh temper (which they do, whenever we give place to them, and thereby make them our own) then they are equally ſinful, with the tempers to which they miniſter.

5. But abſtracting from theſe caſes, wandering thoughts, in the latter ſenſe of the word, that is, thoughts wherein our underſtanding wanders, from the point it has in view, are no more ſinful than the motion of blood in our veins, or of the ſpirits in our brain. If they ariſe from an infirm conſtitution, or from ſome accidental weakneſs or diſtemper, they are as innocent as it is to have a weak conſtitution, or a diſtempered body. And ſurely no one doubts but a bad ſtate of nerves, a fever of any kind, and either a tranſient or a laſting delirium, may conſiſt with perfect innocence. And if they ſhould ariſe in a ſoul which is united to an healthful body, either from the natural union between the body and ſoul, or from any of ten thouſand changes, which may occur in thoſe organs of the body, that miniſter to thought: in any of theſe caſes they are as perfectly innocent as the cauſes from which they ſpring. And ſo they are when they

ſpring from the caſual, involuntary aſſociations of our ideas.

6. If our thoughts wander from the point we had in view, by means of other men, variouſly affecting our ſenſes, they are equally innocent ſtill: for it is no more a ſin, to underſtand what I ſee and hear, and in many caſes cannot help ſeeing, hearing, and underſtanding, than it is to have eyes and ears. "But if the devil injects wandering thoughts, are not thoſe thoughts evil?" They are troubleſome, and in that ſenſe evil; but they are not ſinful. I do not know that he ſpoke to our Lord with an audible voice; perhaps he ſpoke to his heart only, when he ſaid, *All theſe things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me.* But whether he ſpoke inwardly or outwardly, our Lord doubtleſs underſtood what he ſaid. He had therefore a thought correſpondent to thoſe words. But was it a ſinful thought? We know it was not. *In him was no ſin*, either in action, or word, or thought. Nor is there any ſin in a thouſand thoughts of the ſame kind, which Satan may inject into any of our Lord's followers.

7. * It follows, that none of theſe wandering thoughts (whatever unwary perſons have affirmed, thereby grieving whom the Lord had not grieved) are inconſiſtent with perfect love. Indeed if they were, then not only ſharp pain, but ſleep itſelf would be inconſiſtent with it: ſharp pain; for

for whenever this supervenes, whatever we were before thinking of, it will interrupt our thinking, and of course draw our thoughts into another channel: yea, and sleep itself, as it is a state of insensibility and stupidity: and such as is generally mixt with thoughts wandering over the earth, loose, wild and incoherent. Yet certainly these are consistent with perfect love: so then are all wandering thoughts of this kind.

IV. 1. From what has been observed, it is easy to give a clear answer to the last question, What kind of wandering thoughts we may expect and pray to be delivered from?

2. From the former sort of wandering thoughts, those wherein the heart wanders from God: from all that are contrary to his will, or that leave us without God in the world, every one that is perfected in love, is unquestionably delivered. This deliverance therefore we may expect: this we may, we ought to pray for. Wandering thoughts of this kind imply unbelief, if not enmity against God. But both of these he will destroy, will bring utterly to an end. And indeed, from all sinful wandering thoughts we shall be absolutely delivered. All that are perfected in love are delivered from these; else they were not saved from sin. Men and devils will tempt them all manner of ways. But they cannot prevail over them.

2. With regard to the latter ſort of wandering thoughts, the caſe is widely different. 'Till the cauſe is removed, we cannot in reaſon expect the effect ſhould ceaſe. But the cauſes or occaſions of theſe will remain, as long as we remain in the body. So long therefore we have all reaſon to believe, the effects will remain alſo.

3. *To be more particular. Suppoſe a ſoul, however holy, to dwell in a diſtempered body. Suppoſe the brain be ſo throughly diſordered, as that *raging madneſs* follows: will not all the thoughts be wild and unconnected, as long as that diſorder continues? Suppoſe a fever occaſions that *temporary madneſs*, which we term a delirium, can there be any juſt connection of thought, 'till that delirium is removed? Yea, ſuppoſe what is called a *nervous diſorder*, to riſe to ſo high a degree, as to occaſion at leaſt a *partial madneſs*, will there not be a thouſand wandering thoughts? And muſt not theſe irregular thoughts continue, as long as the diſorder which occaſions them?

4. Will not the caſe be the ſame, with regard to thoſe thoughts that neceſſarily ariſe from violent pain? They will, more or leſs, continue while that pain continues, by the inviolable order of nature. This order likewiſe will obtain, where the thoughts are diſturbed, broken or interrupted, by any defect of the apprehenſion, judgment or imagination, flowing from the natural conſtitution of the body. And how many

interruptions

interruptions may ſpring from the unaccountable and involuntary aſſociation of our ideas? Now all theſe are directly or indirectly cauſed by the corruptible body preſſing down the mind. Nor therefore can we expect them to be removed, 'till *this corruptible ſhall put on incorruption.*

5. And then only, when we lie down in the duſt, ſhall we be delivered from thoſe wandering thoughts which are occaſioned by what we ſee and hear, among thoſe by whom we are now ſurrounded. To avoid theſe we muſt go out of the world. For as long as we remain therein, as long as there are men and women round about us, and we have eyes to ſee and ears to hear, the things which we daily ſee and hear, will certainly affect our mind, and will more or leſs, break in upon and interrupt our preceding thoughts.

6. And as long as evil ſpirits roam to and fro in a miſerable, diſordered world, ſo long they will aſſault (whether they can prevail or no) every inhabitant of fleſh and blood. They will trouble even thoſe whom they cannot deſtroy: they will attack if they cannot conquer. And from theſe attacks of our reſtleſs, unwearied enemies, we muſt not look for an entire deliverance, till we are lodged *where the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and where the weary are at reſt.*

7. To ſum up the whole. To expect deliverance from thoſe wandering thoughts which are

occaſioned

occaſioned by evil ſpirits, is to expect that the devil ſhould die or fall aſleep; or at leaſt ſhould no more go about as a roaring lion. To expect deliverance from thoſe which are occaſioned by other men, is to expect either that men ſhould ceaſe from the earth; or that we ſhould be abſolutely ſecluded from them, and have no intercourſe with them: or that having eyes we ſhould not ſee, neither hear with our ears, but be as ſenſeleſs as ſtocks or ſtones. And to pray for deliverance from thoſe which are occaſioned by the body, is in effect to pray that we may leave the body. Otherwiſe it is praying for impoſſibilities and abſurdities; praying that God would reconcile contradictions, by continuing our union with a corruptible body, without the natural, neceſſary conſequences of that union. It is as if we ſhould pray to be angels and men, mortal and immortal at the ſame time. Nay, but when that which is immortal is come, mortality is done away.

8. Rather let us pray, both with the ſpirit and with the underſtanding, that *all* theſe *things may work together for our good*: that we may ſuffer all the infirmities of our nature, all the interruptions of men, all the aſſaults and ſuggeſtions of evil ſpirits, and in all be *more than conquerors*. Let us pray, that we may be delivered from all ſin, that both root and branch may be deſtroyed; that we may be *cleanſed from all pollution of fleſh and ſpirit*, from every evil temper and word and work:

work: that we may *love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our soul, and with all our ſtrength:* that all *the fruit of the ſpirit* may be found in us; not only *love, joy, peace*; but alſo *long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs; fidelity, meekneſs, temperance.* Pray that all *theſe things may flouriſh and abound,* may increaſe in you more and more, 'till an abundant *entrance be miniſtered unto you, into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt!*

SERMON.

SERMON XLII.

SATAN'S DEVICES.

2 Cor. ii. 11.

We are not ignorant of his devices.

1. THE devices whereby the ſubtle *god of this world*, labours to deſtroy the children of God, or at leaſt to torment whom he cannot deſtroy, to perplex and hinder them in running the race which is ſet before them, are numberleſs as the ſtars of heaven or the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore. But it is of one of them only that I now propoſe to ſpeak, (altho' exerted in various ways) whereby he endeavours to divide the goſpel againſt itſelf, and by one part of it to overthrow the other.

2. The inward kingdom of heaven, which is ſet up in the heart of all that *repent and believe the goſpel*, is no other than *righteouſneſs and peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*. Every babe in Chriſt knows we are made partakers of theſe, the very hour that we believe in Jeſus. But theſe are only the firſt fruits of his Spirit: the harveſt is not yet. Altho' theſe bleſſings are inconceivably great, yet we truſt to ſee greater than

theſe.

these. We trust to *love the Lord our God*, not only as we do now, with a weak tho' sincere affection, but *with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength.* We look for power to *rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing and in every thing to give thanks*; knowing *this is the will of God concerning* us *in Christ Jesus.*

3. We expect to be *made perfect in love*, in that love which *casts out* all painful *fear*, and all desire, but that of glorifying him we love, and of loving and serving him more and more. We look for such an increase in the experimental knowledge and love of God our Saviour, as will enable us, always to *walk in the light, as he is in the light.* We believe the whole *mind* will be in us *which was also in Christ Jesus:* that we shall love every man so as to be ready *to lay down our life for his sake.* So as by this love to be freed from anger and pride, and from every unkind affection. We expect to be *cleansed from all our idols, from all filthiness* whether *of flesh or spirit:* to be *saved from all* our *uncleannesses*, inward or outward, to be *purified as he is pure.*

4. We trust in his promise who cannot lie, that the time will surely come, when in every word and work we shall *do his* blessed *will on earth as it is done in heaven:* when all our conversation shall be *seasoned with salt*, all meet to *minister grace to the hearers:* when *whether we eat or drink or whatever we do*, it shall be done *to*

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the glory of God: when all our words and deeds ſhall be *in the name of the Lord Jeſus, giving thanks unto God even the Father thro' him.*

5. Now this is the grand device of Satan, to deſtroy the firſt work of God in the ſoul, or at leaſt, to hinder its increaſe, by our expectation of that greater work. It is therefore my preſent deſign, firſt, to point out the ſeveral ways whereby he endeavours this: and, ſecondly, to obſerve how we may retort theſe fiery darts of the wicked one: how we may riſe the higher by what he intends for an occaſion of our falling.

I. 1. I am, firſt, To point out the ſeveral ways whereby Satan endeavours to deſtroy the firſt work of God in the ſoul, or at leaſt, to hinder its increaſe, by our expectation of that greater work. And 1. He endeavours to damp our joy in the Lord, by the conſideration of our own vileneſs, ſinfulneſs, unworthineſs, added to this, that there *muſt* be a far greater change than is yet, or we cannot ſee the Lord. If we knew we *muſt* remain as we are, even to the day of our death, we might poſſibly draw a kind of comfort, poor as it was, from that neceſſity. But as we know, we need not remain in this ſtate, as we are aſſured, there is a greater change to come, and that unleſs ſin be all done away in this life, we cannot ſee God in glory: that ſubtle adverſary often damps the joy we ſhould otherwiſe feel in what we have

have already attained, by a perverſe repreſentation of what we have not attained, and the abſolute neceſſity of attaining it. So that we cannot rejoice in what we have, becauſe there is more which we have not. We cannot rightly taſte the goodneſs of God, who hath done ſo great things for us, becauſe there are ſo much greater things, which as yet he hath not done. Likewiſe the deeper conviction God works in us of our preſent unholineſs, and the more vehement deſire we feel in our heart, of the entire holineſs he hath promiſed, the more are we tempted to think lightly of the preſent gifts of God, and to undervalue what we have already received, becauſe of what we have not received.

2. If he can prevail thus far, if he can damp our joy, he will ſoon attack our peace alſo. He will ſuggeſt, "Are you fit to ſee God? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. How then can you flatter yourſelf, ſo as to imagine he beholds *you* with approbation? God is holy: You are unholy. What communion hath light with darkneſs? How is it poſſible that *you*, unclean as you are, ſhould be in a ſtate of acceptance with God? You ſee indeed the mark, the prize of your high calling. But do you not ſee, it is afar off? How can you preſume then to think, that all your ſins are already blotted out? How can this be, until you are brought nearer to God, until you bear more reſemblance to him?" Thus will he endeavour, not only to ſhake your

peace,

peace, but even to overturn the very foundation of it: to bring you back by insensible degrees, to the point from whence you set out first: even to seek for justification by works, or by your own righteousness; to make something in *you* the ground of your acceptance, or at least necessarily previous to it.

3. Or if we hold fast, *other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ*; and I am *justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus:* yet he will not cease to urge, "But *the tree is known by its fruits.* And have you the fruits of justification? Is *that mind in you which was in Christ Jesus?* Are you *dead unto sin and alive unto* righteousness? Are you made conformable to the death of Christ, and do you know the power of his resurrection?" And then, comparing the small fruits we feel in our souls, with the fullness of the promises, we shall be ready to conclude, Surely God hath not said, that my sins are forgiven me! Surely I have not received the remission of my sins; for what lot have I among them that are sanctified?"

4. More especially in the time of sickness and pain, he will press this with all his might. "Is it not the word of him that cannot lie, without holiness no man shall see the Lord? But you are not holy. You know it well; you know holiness is the full image of God. And how far is this above, out of your sight? You cannot attain unto it. Therefore all your labour has been

been in vain. All these things you have suffered in vain. You have spent your strength for nought. You are yet in your sins and must therefore perish at the last." And thus, if your eye be not steadily fixt on him who hath borne all your sins, he will bring you again under that *fear of death*, whereby you was so long *subject unto bondage:* and by this means impair, if not wholly destroy, your peace as well as joy in the Lord.

5. But his master-piece of subtility is still behind. Not content to strike at your peace and joy, he will carry his attempts farther yet: he will level his assault against your righteousness also. He will endeavour to shake, yea, if it be possible, to destroy the holiness you have already received by your very expectation of receiving more, of attaining all the image of God.

6. * The manner wherein he attempts this, may partly appear from what has been already observed. For, first, By striking at our joy in the Lord, he strikes likewise at our holiness: seeing joy in the Holy Ghost is a precious means of promoting every holy temper; a choice instrument of God whereby he carries on much of his work in a believing soul. And it is a considerable help not only to inward, but also to outward holiness. It strengthens our hands to go on in the work of faith and in the labour of love: manfully to *fight the good fight of faith, and* to *lay hold on eternal life.* It is peculiarly designed

deſigned of God to be a balance both againſt inward and outward ſufferings: to *lift up the hands that hang down and* confirm *the feeble knees.* Conſequently, whatever damps our joy in the Lord, proportionably obſtructs our holineſs. And therefore ſo far as Satan ſhakes our joy, he hinders our holineſs alſo.

7. * The ſame effect will enſue, if he can by any means either deſtroy or ſhake our peace. For the peace of God is another precious means of advancing the image of God in us. There is ſcarce a greater help to holineſs than this, a continual tranquility of ſpirit, the evenneſs of a mind ſtayed upon God; a calm repoſe in the blood of Jeſus. And without this, it is ſcarce poſſibly to grow in grace, and in the vital knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. For all fear (unleſs the tender, filial fear) freezes and benumbs the ſoul. It binds all the ſprings of ſpiritual life, and ſtops all motion of the heart toward God. And doubt, as it were, bemires the ſoul, ſo that it ſticks faſt in the deep clay. Therefore in the ſame proportion as either of theſe prevail, our growth in holineſs is hindered.

8. * At the ſame time that our wiſe adverſary endeavours, to make our conviction of the neceſſity of perfect love, an occaſion of ſhaking our peace by doubts and fears, he endeavours to weaken, if not deſtroy our faith. Indeed theſe are inſeparably connected; ſo that they muſt ſtand or fall together. So long as faith ſubſiſts,

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we remain in peace: our heart ſtands faſt, while it believes in the Lord. But if we let go our faith, our filial confidence in a loving pardoning God, our peace is at an end, the very foundation on which it ſtood being overthrown. And this is the only foundation of holineſs as well as of peace. Conſequently whatever ſtrikes at this, ſtrikes at the very root of all holineſs. For without this faith, without an abiding ſenſe, that Chriſt loved me and gave himſelf for me, without a continuing conviction, that God for Chriſt's ſake is merciful to me a ſinner, it is impoſſible that I ſhould love God. *We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us*; and in proportion to the ſtrength and clearneſs of our conviction, that he hath loved us and accepted us in his Son. And unleſs we love God, it is not poſſible that we ſhould love our neighbour as ourſelves: nor conſequently, that we ſhould have any right affections, either toward God or toward man. It evidently follows, that whatever weakens our faith, muſt in the ſame degree obſtruct our holineſs. And this is not only the moſt effectual, but alſo the moſt compendious way of deſtroying all holineſs. Seeing it does not affect any one Chriſtian temper, any ſingle grace or fruit of the ſpirit, but ſo far as it ſucceeds, tears up the very root of the whole work of God.

9. *No marvel therefore, that the ruler of the darkneſs of this world, ſhould here put forth all his ſtrength. And ſo we find by experience.

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For it is far eaſier to conceive than it is to expreſs the unſpeakable violence, wherewith this temptation is frequently urged on them, who hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs. When they ſee in a ſtrong and clear light, on the one hand, the deſperate wickedneſs of their own hearts, on the other hand, the unſpotted holineſs to which they are called in Chriſt Jeſus: on the one hand, the depth of their own corruption, of their total alienation from God; on the other, the height of the glory of God, that image of the Holy One wherein they are to be renewed: there is many times no ſpirit left in them; they could almoſt cry out, with God this is impoſſible. They are ready to give up both faith and hope, to caſt away that very confidence, whereby they are to overcome all things, through Chriſt ſtrengthning them; whereby, *after* they *have done the will of God*, they are to *receive the promiſe*.

10. And if they *hold faſt the beginning of their confidence ſtedfaſt unto the end*, they ſhall undoubtedly receive the promiſe of God, reaching through both time and eternity. But here is another ſnare laid for our feet. While we earneſtly pant for that part of the promiſe which is to be accompliſhed here, *for the glorious liberty of the children of God*, we may be led unawares, from the conſideration of the glory which ſhall be revealed. Our eye may be inſenſibly turned

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aſide from that *crown which the righteous Judge* hath promiſed to *give at that day, to all that love his appearing:* and we may be drawn away from the view of that incorruptible inheritance which is reſerved in heaven for us. But this alſo would be a loſs to our ſouls, and an obſtruction to our holineſs. For to walk in the continual ſight of our goal, is a needful help in our running the race that is ſet before us. This it was, the having *reſpect unto the recompence of reward*, which of old time encouraged *Moſes*, rather *to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon: eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt, greater riches than the treaſures of Egypt.* Nay it is expreſly ſaid of a greater than him, that *for the joy that was ſet before him, he endured the croſs and deſpiſed the ſhame*, till he *ſat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* Whence we may eaſily infer, how much more needful for us, is the view of that joy ſet before us, that we may endure whatever croſs the wiſdom of God lays upon us, and preſs on thro' holineſs to glory.

11. But while we are reaching to this, as well as to that glorious liberty which is preparatory to it, we may be in danger of falling into another ſnare of the devil, wherein he labours to intangle the children of God. We may take too much *thought for to-morrow*, ſo as to neglect the improvement of to-day. We may ſo expect

perfect love, as not to use that, which is already *shed abroad in our hearts*. There have not been wanting instances of those, who have greatly suffered hereby. They were so taken up with what they were to receive hereafter, as utterly to neglect what they had already received. In expectation of having five talents more, they buried their one talent in the earth. At least they did not improve it as they might have done, to the glory of God and the good of their own souls.

12. Thus does the subtle adversary of God and man, endeavour to make void the counsel of God, by dividing the gospel against itself, and making one part of it overthrow the other: while the first work of God in the soul is destroyed by the expectation of his perfect work. We have seen several of the ways wherein he attempts this, by cutting off, as it were, the springs of holiness. But this he likewise does more directly, by making that blessed hope an occasion of unholy tempers.

13. Thus, whenever our heart is eagerly athirst for all the great and precious promises, when we pant after the fulness of God, as the hart after the water-brook, when our soul breaketh out in fervent desire, "Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming?" He will not neglect the opportunity, of tempting us to murmur against God. He will use all his wisdom and

and all his ſtrength, if haply in an unguarded hour, we may be influenced to repine at our Lord, for thus delaying his coming. At leaſt, he will labour to excite ſome degree of fretfulneſs or impatience: and perhaps of envy at thoſe, whom we believe to have already attained the prize of our high calling. He well knows, that by giving way to any of theſe tempers, we are pulling down the very thing we would build up. By *thus* following after perfect holineſs, we become more unholy than before. Yea, there is great danger that our laſt ſtate ſhould be worſe than the firſt: like them of whom the apoſtle ſpeaks, in thoſe dreadful words, *It had been better they had never known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they had known it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.*

14. * And from hence he hopes to reap another advantage, even to bring up an evil report of the good way. He is ſenſible, how few are able to diſtinguiſh (and too many are not willing ſo to do) between the accidental abuſe and the natural tendency of a doctrine. Theſe therefore, will he continually blend together, with regard to the doctrine of Chriſtian perfection: in order to prejudice the minds of unwary men againſt the glorious promiſes of God. And how frequently, how generally, I had almoſt ſaid, how univerſally has he prevailed here-

in? For who is there that obſerves any of theſe accidental ill effects of this doctrine, and does not immediately conclude, this is its natural tendency? And does not readily cry out, "See, theſe are the fruits (meaning the natural, neceſſary fruits) of ſuch doctrine!" Not ſo. They are fruits which may accidentally ſpring from the abuſe of a great and precious truth. But the abuſe of this, or any other ſcriptural doctrine, does by no means deſtroy its uſe. Neither can the unfaithfulneſs of man, perverting his right way, *make the promiſe of God of no effect.* No: let God be true and every man a liar. The word of the Lord it ſhall ſtand. *Faithful is he that hath promiſed: he alſo will do it.* Let not us then be *removed from the hope of the goſpel.* Rather let us obſerve, which was the ſecond thing propoſed, how we may retort theſe fiery darts of the wicked one: how we may riſe the higher by what he intends for an occaſion of our falling.

II. 1. And, firſt, does Satan endeavour to damp your joy in the Lord, by the conſideration of your ſinfulneſs, added to this, that without entire, univerſal *holineſs no man can ſee the Lord?* You may caſt back this dart upon his own head, while through the grace of God, the more you feel of your own vileneſs, the more you rejoice in confident hope, that all this ſhall be done away.

While

While you hold fast this hope, every evil temper you feel, though you hate it with a perfect hatred, may be a means, not of leſſening your humble joy, but rather of increaſing it. "This and this, may you ſay, ſhall likewiſe periſh from the preſence of the Lord. Like as the wax melteth at the fire, ſo ſhall this melt away before his face." By this means the greater that change is, which remains to be wrought in your ſoul, the more may you triumph in the Lord and rejoice in the God of your ſalvation: who hath done ſo great things for you already, and will do ſo much greater things than theſe.

2. Secondly, the more vehemently he aſſaults your peace with that ſuggeſtion, "God is holy, you are unholy. You are immenſely diſtant from that holineſs, without which you cannot ſee God: how then can you be in the favour of God? How can you fancy you are juſtified?" Take the more earneſt heed to hold faſt, that, *Not by works of righteouſneſs which I have done,* I am *found in him:* I am *accepted in the beloved; not having my own righteouſneſs* (as the cauſe either in whole or in part of our juſtification before God) *but that which is by faith in Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith.* O bind this about your neck: write it upon the table of thy heart. Wear it as a bracelet upon thy arm, as frontlets between thine eyes: I am *juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption*

that is in Jesus Christ. Value and esteem more and more that precious truth, *By grace we are saved through faith.* Admire more and more the free grace of God, in so loving the world as to give *his only Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life.* So shall the sense of the sinfulness you feel on the one hand, and of the holiness you expect on the other, both contribute to establish your peace and to make it flow as a river. So shall that peace flow on with an even stream, in spite of all those mountains of ungodliness, which shall become a plain in the day when the Lord cometh, to take full possession of your heart. Neither will sickness or pain, or the approach of death, occasion any doubt or fear. You know a day, an hour, a moment with God is as a thousand years. He cannot be straightened for time, wherein to work whatever remains to be done in your soul. And God's time is always the best time. Therefore be thou *careful for nothing.* Only *make* thy *request known unto him,* and that not with doubt or fear, but *thanksgiving:* as being previously assured, he cannot withhold from thee any manner of thing that is good.

3. Thirdly, the more you are tempted to give up your shield, to cast away your faith, your confidence in his love, so much the more take heed that you hold fast that, whereunto you have attained. So much the more labour to *stir up the gift of God which is in you.* Never let that slip,

ſlip, I have *an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous:* and *the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himſelf for me.* Be this thy glory and crown of rejoicing. And ſee that no one take thy crown. Hold that faſt, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and ſhall ſtand at the latter day upon the earth.* And I now *have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins.* Thus, being filled with all peace and joy in believing, preſs on in the peace and joy of faith to the renewal of thy whole ſoul, in the image of him that created thee. Mean while cry continually to God, that thou mayſt ſee that prize of thy high calling, not as Satan repreſents it, in a horrid dreadful ſhape, but in its genuine native beauty: not as ſomething that *muſt* be, or thou wilt go to hell, but as what *may* be, to lead thee to heaven. Look upon it as the moſt *deſirable* gift, which is in all the ſtores of the rich mercies of God. Beholding it in the true point of light, thou wilt hunger after it more and more: thy whole ſoul will be athirſt for God, and for this glorious conformity to his likeneſs. And having received a good hope of this, and ſtrong conſolation through grace, thou wilt no more be weary or faint in thy mind, but wilt follow on till thou attaineſt.

4. * In the ſame power of faith, preſs on to glory. Indeed this is the ſame proſpect ſtill. God hath joined from the beginning pardon, holineſs, heaven. And why ſhould man put them

aſunder? O beware of this. Let not one link of the golden chain be broken. God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven me. He is now renewing me in his own image. Shortly he will make me meet for himſelf, and take me to ſtand before his face. I whom he hath juſtified thro' the blood of his Son, being throughly ſanctified by his Spirit, ſhall quickly aſcend to the *New Jeruſalem, the city of the living God.* Yet a little while and I ſhall *come to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, and to God the judge of all, and to Jeſus the mediator of the new covenant.* How ſoon will theſe ſhadows flee away, and the day of eternity dawn upon me! How ſoon ſhall I drink of *the river of the water of life, going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb? There all his ſervants ſhall praiſe him and ſhall ſee his face, and his name ſhall be upon their foreheads. And no night ſhall be there; and they have no need of a candle or the light of the ſun. For the Lord God enlighteneth them, and they ſhall reign for ever and ever.*

5. And if you thus *taſte of the good word and and the powers of the world to come,* you will not murmur againſt God, becauſe you are not yet *meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light.* Inſtead of repining at your not being wholly delivered, you will praiſe God for thus far delivering you. You will magnify God for what he hath done, and take it as an earneſt of what he will do.

do. You will not fret againſt him, becauſe you are not yet renewed, but bleſs him becauſe you ſhall be; and becauſe *now is your ſalvation* from all ſin, *nearer than when you* firſt *believed.* Inſtead of uſeleſsly tormenting yourſelf becauſe the time is not fully come, you will calmly and quietly wait for it, knowing that it *will come and will not tarry.* You may therefore the more chearfully endure as yet, the burden of ſin that ſtill remains in you, becauſe it will not always remain. Yet a little while and it ſhall be clean gone. Only *tarry thou the Lord's leiſure: be ſtrong, and he ſhall comfort thy heart, and put thou thy truſt in the Lord.*

6. And if you ſee any who appear (ſo far as man can judge, but God alone ſearcheth the hearts) to be already partakers of their hope, already *made perfect in love:* far from envying the grace of God in them, let it rejoice and comfort your heart. Glorify God for their ſake. *If one member is honoured,* ſhall not *all the members rejoice with it?* Inſtead of jealouſy or evil ſurmiſing concerning them, praiſe God for the conſolation. Rejoice in having a freſh proof of the faithfulneſs of God in fulfilling all his promiſes. And ſtir yourſelf up the more, to *apprehend that for which you alſo are apprehended of Chriſt Jeſus.*

6. * In order to this, redeem the time, improve the present moment. Buy up every opportunity of growing in grace, or of doing good. Let not the thought of receiving more grace to-morrow, make you negligent of to-day. You have one talent now. If you expect five more, so much the rather improve that you have. And the more you expect to receive hereafter, the more labour for God now. Sufficient for the day is the grace thereof. God is now pouring his benefits upon you. Now approve yourself a faithful steward, of the present grace of God. Whatever may be to-morrow, give all diligence to-day, to *add to your faith, courage, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness and the fear of God*, 'till you attain that pure and perfect love. Let *these things be* now *in you and abound.* Be not now slothful or unfruitful. So shall an entrance be ministred *into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

7. Lastly, If in time past you have abused this blessed hope of being holy as he is holy, yet do not therefore cast it away. Let the abuse cease, the use remain. Use it now to the more abundant glory of God and profit of your own soul. In stedfast faith, in calm tranquillity of spirit, in full assurance of hope, rejoicing evermore for what God hath done, *press* ye *on unto perfection.* Daily growing in the

the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and going on from strength to strength, in resignation, in patience, in humble thankfulness for what ye have attained, and for what ye shall, run the race set before you, *looking unto Jesus*, 'till through perfect love ye enter into his glory!

SERMON XLIII.

THE SCRIPTURE-WAY OF SALVATION.

EPH. ii. 8.

Ye are saved through faith.

1. NOTHING can be more intricate, complex, and hard to be understood, than religion as it has been often described. And this is not only true concerning the religion of the Heathens, even many of the wisest of them, but concerning the religion of those also, who were, in some sense, Christians: yea, and men of great name in the Christian world, men *who seemed to be pillars* thereof. Yet how easy to be understood, how plain and simple a thing is the genuine religion of Jesus Christ! Provided only, that we take it in its native form, just as it is described in the oracles of God. It is exactly suited by the wise Creator and Governor of the world, to the weak understanding, and narrow capacity, of man in his present state. How observable is this, both with regard to the end it proposes, and the means to attain that end! The

The end is, in one word ſalvation: the means to attain it faith.

2. It is eaſily diſcerned, that theſe two little words, I mean faith and ſalvation, include the ſubſtance of all the bible, the marrow, as it were, of the whole ſcripture. So much the more ſhould we take all poſſible care, to avoid all miſtake concerning them, and to form a true and accurate judgment concerning both the one and the other.

3. Let us then ſeriouſly enquire

I. What is ſalvation?

II. What is that faith whereby we are ſaved, and

III. How we are ſaved by it?

I. 1. And, firſt, let us enquire, What is *ſalvation?* The ſalvation which is here ſpoken of, is not what is frequently underſtood by that word, the going to heaven, eternal happineſs. It is not the ſoul's going to paradiſe, termed by our Lord, *Abraham's boſom.* It is not a bleſſing which lies on the other ſide death, or (as we uſually ſpeak) in the other world. The very words of the text itſelf, put this beyond all queſtion. *Ye* are *ſaved.* It is not ſomething at a diſtance: it is a preſent thing; a bleſſing, which through the free mercy of God, ye are now in poſſeſſion of. Nay, the words may be rendered, and that with equal propriety, *Ye* have been *ſaved.* So that

that the ſalvation which is here ſpoken of, might be extended to the entire work of God, from the firſt dawning of grace in the ſoul, 'till it is conſumated in glory.

2. If we take this in its utmoſt extent, it will include all that is wrought in the ſoul, by what is frequently termed, *natural conſcience*, but more properly, *preventing grace:* all the *drawings of the Father:* the deſires after God, which, if we yield to them, increaſe more and more: all that *light*, wherewith the Son of God *inlighteneth every one that cometh into the world, ſhewing* every man, *to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with* his *God:* all the *convictions* which his Spirit, from time to time, works in every child of man. Although, it is true, the generality of men ſtifle them as ſoon as poſſible; and after awhile forget, or at leaſt deny, that ever they had them at all.

3. But we are at preſent concerned only with that ſalvation, which the apoſtle is directly ſpeaking of. And this conſiſts of two general parts, juſtification and ſanctification.

Juſtification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveneſs of all our ſins, and (what is neceſſarily implied therein) our acceptance with God. The price whereby this hath been procured for us, (commonly termed the *meritorious cauſe* of our juſtification) is the blood and righteouſneſs of Chriſt, or (to expreſs it a little more clearly) all that Chriſt hath done and ſuffered for us, 'till

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he poured out his ſoul for the tranſgreſſors. The immediate effects of juſtification are, the peace of God, a *peace that paſſeth all underſtanding*, and a *rejoicing in* hope *of the glory of God*, with joy *unſpeakable and full of glory.*

4. And at the ſame time that we are juſtified, yea in that very moment, *ſanctification* begins. In that inſtant, we are *born again, born from above, born of the Spirit.* There is a *real* as well as a *relative* change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the *love of God ſhed abroad in our heart, by the Holy Ghoſt which is given unto us*, producing love to all mankind, and more eſpecially to the children of God: expelling the love of the world, the love of pleaſure, of eaſe, of honour, of money: together with pride, anger, ſelf-will, and every other evil temper: in a word, changing the *earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh mind*, into *the mind which was in Chriſt Jeſus.*

5. How naturally do thoſe who experience ſuch a change, imagine that all ſin is gone? That it is utterly rooted out of their heart, and has no more any place therein? How eaſily do they draw that inference, "I *feel* no ſin: therefore I *have* none." It does not *ſtir*; therefore it does not *exiſt*: it has no *motion*; therefore it has no *being.*

6. But it is ſeldom long, before they are undeceived, finding ſin was only ſuſpended, not deſtroyed. Temptations return and ſin revives, ſhewing it was but ſtunned before, not dead.

dead. They now feel two principles in themſelves plainly contrary to each other, *the fleſh luſting againſt the ſpirit*, nature oppoſing the grace of God. They cannot deny, that, although they ſtill feel power to believe in Chriſt, and to love God; and although his *Spirit* ſtill *witneſſes with* their *ſpirits, that* they *are children of God:* yet they feel in themſelves, ſometimes pride or ſelf-will, ſometimes anger or unbelief. They find one or more of theſe frequently *ſtirring* in their heart, though not *conquering:* yea, perhaps, *thruſting ſore at them, that they* may *fall: but the Lord is* their *help.*

7. How exactly did *Macarius*, fourteen hundred years ago, deſcribe the preſent experience of the children of God? "The unſkilful (or unexperienced) when grace operates, preſently imagine, they have no more ſin. Whereas they that have diſcretion cannot deny, that even we who have the grace of God, may be moleſted again.—For we have often had inſtances of ſome among the brethren, who have experienced ſuch grace, as to affirm that they had no ſin in them. And yet after all, when they thought themſelves entirely freed from it, the corruption that lurked within, was ſtirred up anew, and they were well nigh burnt up."

8. From the time of our being *born again*, the gradual work of ſanctification takes place. We are enabled *by the Spirit* to *mortify the deeds of the body*, of our evil nature. And as we are more

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and more dead to ſin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from grace to grace, while we are careful to *abſtain from all appearance of evil*, and are *zealous of good works, as we have opportunity, doing good to all men.* While we walk in all his ordinances blameleſs, therein worſhipping him in ſpirit and in truth: while we take up our croſs, and deny ourſelves every pleaſure, that does not lead us to God.

9. It is thus that we wait for entire ſanctification, for a full ſalvation from all our ſins, from pride, ſelf-will, anger, unbelief; or, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, *go on to perfection.* But what is perfection? The word has various ſenſes: here it means, perfect love. It is love excluding ſin: love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the ſoul. It is love *rejoicing evermore, praying without ceaſing, in every thing giving thanks.*

II. But what is that *faith* through *which we are ſaved?* This is the ſecond point to be conſidered.

1. Faith in general is defined by the apoſtle Ἔλεγχος πραγμάτων ὰ βλεπομένων· *An evidence*, a divine *evidence and conviction* (the word means both) *of things not ſeen:* not viſible, not perceivable either by ſight, or by any other of the external ſenſes. It implies both a ſupernatural *evidence* of God and of the things of God, a kind of ſpiritual *light* exhibited to the ſoul, and a ſupernatural *ſight* or perception thereof: accordingly

ingly the ſcripture ſpeaks of God's giving ſometimes light, ſometimes a power of diſcerning it. So St. *Paul. God who commanded light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* And elſewhere the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks, *of the eyes of* our *underſtanding being opened.* By this twofold operation of the Holy Spirit, having the eyes of our ſoul both *opened* and *enlightened*, we ſee the things which the natural *eye hath not ſeen, neither the ear heard.* We have a proſpect of the inviſible things of God: we ſee the *ſpiritual world*, which is all round about us, and yet no more diſcerned by our natural faculties, than if it had no being: and we ſee the *eternal world*, piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity. Clouds and darkneſs then reſt upon it no more, but we already ſee the glory which ſhall be revealed.

2. Taking the word in a more particular ſenſe, faith is a divine evidence and conviction, not only that *God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf*; but alſo that *Chriſt loved* me, *and gave himſelf for* me. It is by this faith, (whether we term it, the *eſſence*, or rather a *property* thereof) that we *receive Chriſt*, that we receive him in all his offices, as our prophet, prieſt, and king. It is by this that he *is made of God unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption.*

3. " But

3. "But is this the *faith of assurance*, or *faith of adherence?*" The scripture mentions no such distinction. The apostle says, *There is one faith, and one hope of our calling*, one Christian, saving faith, as *there is one Lord*, in whom we believe, and *one God and Father of us all.* And it is certain, this faith necessarily implies an *assurance* (which is here only another word for *evidence*, it being hard to tell the difference between them) that *Christ loved* me, *and gave himself for* me. For *he that believeth*, with the true, living faith, *hath the witness in himself. The Spirit witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God. Because* he is a *Son, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart, crying Abba, Father:* giving him an assurance that he is so, and a child-like confidence in him. But let it be observed, that, in the very nature of the thing, the assurance goes before the confidence. For a man cannot have a child-like confidence in God, till he knows, he is a child of God. Therefore confidence, trust, reliance, adherence, or whatever else it be called, is not the first, as some have supposed, but the second branch or act of faith.

4. It is by this faith we *are saved*, justified and sanctified, taking that word in its highest sense. But how are we justified and sanctified by faith? This is our third head of enquiry. And this being the main point in question, and a point of no ordinary importance, it will not be improper, to

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give it a more distinct and particular consideration.

III. 1. And first, how are we justified by faith? In what sense is this to be understood? I answer, faith is the condition, and the only condition of justification. It is the condition: none is justified but he that believes; without faith no man is justified. And it is the only condition; this alone is sufficient for justification. Every one that believes is justified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words: no man is justified, 'till he believes: every man when he believes is justified.

2. "But does not God command us to *repent* also? Yea, and to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance?* To *cease*, for instance, *from doing evil*, and *learn to do well?* And is not both the one and the other of the utmost necessity? Insomuch, that if we willingly neglect either, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all? But if this be so, how can it be said, that faith is the only condition of justification?"

God does undoubtedly command us, both to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance: which if we willingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all: therefore both repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, are in some sense necessary to justification. But they are not necessary in the *same sense* with faith, nor in the *same degree*. Not in the *same degree*; for

for thofe fruits are only neceſſary *conditionally*; if there be time and opportunity for them. Otherwiſe a man may be juſtified without them, as was the *thief* upon the *croſs*: (if we may call him ſo; for a late writer has diſcovered, that he was no *thief*, but a very honeſt and reſpectable perſon!) But he cannot be juſtified without faith: this is impoſſible. Likewiſe let a man have ever ſo much repentance, or ever ſo many of the fruits meet for repentance, yet all this does not at all avail: he is not juſtified 'till he believes. But the moment he believes, with or without thoſe fruits, yea, with more or leſs repentance, he is juſtified. Not in the *ſame ſenſe*; for repentance and its fruits are only *remotely* neceſſary, neceſſary in order to faith: whereas faith is *immediately* and *directly* neceſſary to juſtification. It remains, that faith is the only condition, which is *immediately* and *proximately* neceſſary to juſtification.

3. "But do you believe, we are ſanctified by faith? We know you believe, that we are juſtified by faith: but do not you believe, and accordingly teach, that we are ſanctified by our works?"

So it has been roundly and vehemently affirmed, for theſe five and twenty years. But I have conſtantly declared juſt the contrary: and that in all manner of ways. I have continually teſtified in private and in public, that we are ſanctified, as well as juſtified, by faith. And indeed the

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one of thofe great truths does exceedingly illuftrate the other. Exactly as we are juftified by faith, fo are we fanctified by faith. Faith is the condition, and the only condition of fanctification, exactly as it is of juftification. It is the condition; none is fanctified but he that believes; without faith no man is fanctified. And it is the only condition: this alone is fufficient for fanctification. Every one that believes is fanctified, whatever elfe he has, as has not. In other words: no man is fanctified till he believes: every man when he believes is fanctified.

4. "But is there not a repentance confequent upon, as well as a repentance previous to, juftification? And is it not incumbent on all that are juftified, to be *zealous of good works?* Yea, are not thefe fo neceffary, that if a man willingly neglect them, he cannot reafonably expect, that he fhall ever be fanctified in the full fenfe, that is, *perfected in love?* Nay, can he *grow* at all *in grace, in the* loving *knowledge of our Lord Jefus Chrift?* Yea, can he retain the grace which God has already given him? Can he continue in the faith which he has received, or in the favour of God? Do not you yourfelf allow all this, and continually affert it? But if this be fo, how can it be faid, that faith is the only condition of fanctification?"

5. I do allow all this, and continually maintain it, as the truth of God. I allow, there is a repentance

pentance consequent upon, as well as a repentance previous to justification. It is incumbent on all that are justified, to be zealous of good works. And these are so necessary, that if a man willingly neglect them, he cannot reasonably expect, that he shall ever be sanctified. He cannot *grow in grace*, in the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus. Nay, he cannot retain the grace he has received, he cannot continue in faith, or in the favour of God.

What is the inference we must draw herefrom? Why, that both repentance, rightly understood, and the practice of all good works, works of piety, as well as works of mercy, (now properly so called, since they spring from faith) are in some sense necessary to sanctification.

6. I say, "Repentance rightly understood." For this must not be confounded with the former repentance. The repentance consequent upon justification is widely different from that which is antecedent to it. This implies no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of the wrath of God. It does not suppose any doubt of the favour of God, or any *fear that hath torment*. It is properly a conviction wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the *sin* which still *remains* in our heart, of the φρόνημα σαρκός· *the carnal mind*, which "does still *remain*," as our church speaks, "even in them that are regenerate:" altho' it does no longer *reign*, it has not now dominion over them. It is a conviction of our proneness to evil,

evil, of an *heart bent to backſliding*, of the ſtill-continuing tendency of the *fleſh* to *luſt againſt the ſpirit*. Sometimes, unleſs we continually watch and pray, it luſteth to pride, ſometimes to anger, ſometimes to love of the world, love of eaſe, love of honour, or love of pleaſure more than of God. It is a conviction of the tendency of our heart to ſelf-will, to atheiſm, or idolatry: and above all to unbelief, whereby in a thouſand ways, and under a thouſand pretences, we are ever *departing*, more or leſs, *from the living* God.

7. With this conviction of the ſin *remaining* in our hearts, there is joined a clear conviction of the ſin remaining in our lives, ſtill *cleaving* to all our words and actions. In the beſt of theſe we now diſcern a mixture of evil, either in the ſpirit, the matter or the manner of them: ſomething that could not endure the righteous judgment of God, were he *extreme to mark what is done amiſs*. Where we leaſt ſuſpected it, we find a taint of pride or ſelf-will, of unbelief or idolatry: ſo that we are now more aſhamed of our beſt duties, than formerly of our worſt ſins: and hence we cannot but feel, that theſe are ſo far from having any thing meritorious in them, yea ſo far from being able to ſtand, in ſight of the divine juſtice, that for thoſe alſo we ſhould be guilty before God, were it not for the blood of the covenant.

8. Experience

8. Experience ſhews, that together with the conviction of ſin *remaining* in our hearts and *cleaving* to all our words and actions, as well as the guilt which on account thereof we ſhould incur, were we not continually ſprinkled with the atoning blood; one thing more is implied in this repentance, namely a conviction of our helpleſſneſs, of our utter inability to think one good thought, or to form one good deſire; and much more to ſpeak one word aright, or to perform one good action, but thro' his free, almighty grace firſt preventing us, and then accompanying us every moment.

9. "But what good works are thoſe, the practice of which, you affirm to be neceſſary to ſanctification." Firſt, all works of piety, ſuch as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our cloſet: receiving the ſupper of the Lord: ſearching the ſcriptures, by hearing, reading, meditating: and uſing ſuch a meaſure of faſting or abſtinence, as our bodily health allows.

10. Secondly, All works of mercy, whether they relate to the bodies or ſouls of men: ſuch as feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, entertaining the ſtranger, viſiting thoſe that are in priſon, or ſick, or variouſly afflicted: ſuch as the endeavouring to inſtruct the ignorant, to awaken the ſtupid ſinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to ſuccour the tempted, or contribute in

any manner to the saving of souls from death. This is the repentance, and these the fruits meet for repentance, which are necessary to full sanctification. This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for compleat salvation.

11. Hence may appear the extreme mischievousness of that seemingly innocent opinion, That "there is no sin in a believer; that all sin is destroyed, root and branch, the moment a man is justified." By totally preventing that repentance, it quite blocks up the way to sanctification. There is no place for repentance, in him who believes there is no sin either in his life or heart. Consequently there is no place for his being *perfected in love* to which that repentance is indispensably necessary.

12. Hence it may likewise appear, that there is no possible danger in *thus* expecting full salvation. For suppose we were mistaken, suppose no such blessing ever was, or can be attained, yet we lose nothing: nay, that very expectation quickens us in using all the talents which God has given us; yea, in improving them all, so that when our Lord cometh, he will *receive* his *own with increase*.

13. But to return. Tho' it be allowed, That both this repentance and its fruits are necessary to full salvation, yet they are not necessary either in the *same sense* with faith, or in the *same degree*: not in the *same degree*; for these fruits are only

only neceſſary *conditionally*, if there be time and opportunity for them, otherwiſe a man may be ſanctified without them. But he cannot be ſanctified without faith. Likewiſe let a man have ever ſo much of this repentance, or ever ſo many good works, yet all this does not at all avail: he is not ſanctified till he believes. But the moment he believes, with or without thoſe fruits, yea, with more or leſs of this repentance, he is ſanctified. Not in the *ſame ſenſe*; for this repentance and theſe fruits are only *remotely* neceſſary, neceſſary in order to the continuance of his faith, as well as the increaſe of it: whereas faith is *immediately* and *directly*, neceſſary to ſanctification. It remains, that faith is the only condition, which is *immediately* and *proximately* neceſſary to ſanctification.

14. "But what is that faith whereby we are ſanctified, ſaved from ſin and perfected in love?" It is a divine evidence and conviction, 1. That God hath promiſed it in the holy ſcripture. Till we are throughly ſatisfied of this, there is no moving one ſtep further. And one would imagine, there needed not one word more, to ſatisfy a reaſonable man of this, than the ancient promiſe, *Then will I circumciſe thy heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your ſoul.* How clearly does this expreſs the being perfected in love? How ſtrongly imply the being ſaved from

all sin? For as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein?

15. It is a divine evidence and conviction, secondly, That what God hath promised he is *able* to perform. Admitting therefore that *with men it is impossible*, to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, to purify the heart from all sin, and to fill it with all holiness, yet this creates no difficulty in the case, seeing *with* God *all things are possible*. And surely no one ever imagined it was possible to any power less than that of the Almighty! But if God speaks, it shall be done. God saith, *Let there be light: and there is light.*

16. It is, thirdly, a divine evidence and conviction that he is able and willing to do it *now*. And why not? Is not a moment to him, the same as a thousand years? He cannot want more time to accomplish whatever is his will. And he cannot want or stay for any more *worthiness* or *fitness* in the persons he is pleased to honour. We may therefore boldly say, at any point of time, *Now is the day of salvation.* To-day, *if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Behold! All things are now ready! Come unto the marriage!*

17. To this confidence, That God is both able and willing to sanctify us *now*, there needs to be added one thing more, a divine evidence and conviction, That *he doth* it. In that hour it is done. God says to the inmost soul, *According to*

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thy faith, be it unto thee! Then the ſoul is pure from every ſpot of ſin; *it is clean from all unrighteouſneſs.* The believer then experiences the deep meaning of thoſe ſolemn words, *If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowſhip one with another, and the blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son cleanſeth us from all ſin.*

18. "But does God work this great work in the ſoul *gradually* or *inſtantaneouſly?*" Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in ſome: I mean, in this ſenſe. They do not advert to the particular moment, wherein ſin ceaſes to be. But it is infinitely deſirable, were it the will of God, that it ſhould be done inſtantaneouſly; that the Lord ſhould deſtroy ſin *by the breath of his mouth,* in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And ſo he generally does, a plain fact, of which there is evidence enough to ſatisfy any unprejudiced perſon. *Thou* therefore look for it every moment. Look for it in the way above deſcribed; in all thoſe *good works* whereunto thou art *created a new in Chriſt Jeſus.* There is then no danger: you can be no worſe, if you are no better for that expectation. For were you to be diſappointed of your hope, ſtill you loſe nothing. But you ſhall not be diſappointed of your hope: it will come, and will not tarry. Look for it then every day, every hour, every moment. Why not this hour, this moment? Certainly you may look for it *now,* if you believe it is by faith. And by this token you may ſurely know, whether you

seek it by faith or by works. If by works, you want something to be done *first: before* you are sanctified. You think, "I must first *be* or *do* thus or thus." Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it *as you are:* and if as you are, then expect it *now.* It is of importance to observe, that there is an inseparable connexion between these three points, expect it *by faith*, expect it *as you are*, and expect it *now!* To deny one of them is to deny them all: to allow one, is to allow them all. Do *you* believe, we are sanctified by faith? Be true then to your principle; and look for this blessing just as you are, neither better, nor worse; as a poor sinner, that has still nothing to pay, nothing to plead, but *Christ died.* And if you look for it as you are, then expect it *now.* Stay for nothing: why should you? Christ is ready. And he is all you want. He is waiting for you: he is at the door! Let your inmost soul cry out,

" Come in, come in, thou heavenly guest!
" Nor hence again remove;
" But sup with me, and let the feast
" Be everlasting love."

SERMON

SERMON XLIV.

ORIGINAL SIN.

GEN. vi. 5.

And God saw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

1. HOW widely different is this from the fair pictures of human nature, which men have drawn in all ages! The writings of many of the antients abound with gay deſcriptions of the dignity of man: whom ſome of them paint as having all virtue and happineſs in his compoſition, or at leaſt, entirely in his power, without being beholden to any other being: yea, as ſelf-ſufficient, able to live on his own ſtock, and little inferior to God himſelf.

2. Nor have Heathens alone, men who were guided in their reſearches by little more than the dim light of reaſon, but many likewiſe of them that bear the name of Chriſt, and to whom are intruſted the oracles of God, ſpoke as magnificently concerning the nature of man, as if it were all innocence and perfection. Accounts of this

kind have particularly abounded in the preſent century: and perhaps in no part of the world more, than in our own country. Here not a few perſons of ſtrong underſtanding, as well as extenſive learning, have employed their utmoſt abilities to ſhew, what they termed, "The fair ſide of human nature." And it muſt be acknowledged, that if their accounts of him be juſt, man is ſtill but *a little lower than the angels*, or (as the words may be more literally rendered) *a little leſs than* God.

3. Is it any wonder, that theſe accounts are very readily received by the generality of men? For who is not eaſily perſuaded to think favourably of himſelf? Accordingly writers of this kind are almoſt univerſally read, admired, applauded. And innumerable are the converts they have made, not only in the gay, but the learned world. So that it is now quite unfaſhionable to talk otherwiſe; to ſay any thing to the diſparagement of human nature: which is generally allowed, notwithſtanding a few infirmities, to be very innocent and wiſe and virtuous.

4. But in the mean-time, what muſt we do with our bibles; for they will never agree with this. Theſe accounts, however pleaſing to fleſh and blood, are utterly irreconcileable with the ſcriptural. The ſcripture avers, that *by one man's diſobedience, all men were conſtituted ſinners:* that *in* Adam *all died*, ſpiritually died, loſt the life and the image of God: that fallen, ſinful *Adam* then

then *begat a ſon in his own likeneſs*: nor was it poſſible he ſhould beget him in any other: for *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* That conſequently *we* as well as other men *were by nature, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, without hope, without* God *in the world*, and therefore *children of wrath*: that every man may ſay, *I was ſhapen in wickedneſs, and in ſin did my mother conceive me*: that *there is no difference, in that all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of* God: of that glorious image of God, wherein man was originally created. And hence, when *the* Lord *looked down from heaven upon the children of men, he ſaw they were all gone out of the way*, they were *all together become abominable, there was none righteous, no not one*, none that truly *ſought after* God: juſt agreeable this, to what is declared by the Holy Ghoſt, in the words above recited, God *ſaw* when he looked down from heaven before, *that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth*: ſo great, that *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

This is God's account of man: from which I ſhall take occaſion, *firſt*, To ſhew what men were before the flood; *ſecondly*, To enquire, Whether they are not the ſame now? And, *thirdly*, To add ſome inferences.

I. 1. I am, *firſt*, By opening the words of the text, to ſhew, what men were before the flood.

And we may fully depend on the account here given. For God saw it, and he cannot be deceived. He *saw that the wickedness of man was great.* Not of this or that man; not of a few men only: not barely of the greater part, but of *man in general*, of men universally. The word includes the whole human race, every partaker of human nature. And it is not easy for us to compute their numbers, to tell how many thousands and millions they were. The earth then retained much of its primeval beauty and original fruitfulness. The face of the globe was not rent and torn, as it is now: and spring and summer went hand in hand. 'Tis therefore probable, it afforded sustenance for far more inhabitants, than it is now capable of sustaining: and these must be immensely multiplied, while men begat sons and daughters for seven or eight hundred years together. Yet among all this inconceivable number, *only* Noah *found favour with* God. He alone (perhaps including part of his household) was an exception from the universal wickedness, which by the just judgment of God, in a short time after brought on universal destruction. All the rest were partakers in the same guilt, as they were in the same punishment.

2. God *saw all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart*—Of his soul, his inward man, the spirit within him, the principle of all his inward and outward motions. He *saw all the imaginations.* It is not possible to find a word of a more exten-

sive

five signification. It includes whatever is formed, made, fabricated within; all that is, or passes in the soul: every inclination, affection, passion, appetite; every temper, design, thought. It must of consequence include every word and action, as naturally flowing from these fountains: and being either good or evil, according to the fountain from which they severally flow.

3. Now God *saw that all* this, the whole thereof *was evil*, contrary to moral rectitude; contrary to the nature of God, which necessarily includes all good; contrary to the divine will, the eternal standard of good and evil: contrary to the pure, holy image of God, wherein man was originally created, and wherein he stood when God surveying the works of his hands, saw them *all* to to be *very good:* contrary to justice, mercy and truth, and to the essential relations which each man bore to his Creator and his fellow creatures.

4. But was there not good mingled with the evil? Was there not light intermixt with the darkness? No; none at all: God *saw that the whole imagination of the heart* of man was only *evil*. It cannot indeed be denied, but many of them, perhaps all, had good motions put into their hearts. For the Spirit of God did then also *strive with man*, if haply he might repent: more especially during that gracious reprieve, the hundred and twenty years, while the ark was preparing. But still *in his flesh dwelt no good thing:* all his nature was purely evil. It was wholly con-

fiſtent with itſelf, and unmixt with any thing of an oppoſite nature.

5. However it may ſtill be matter of enquiry, "Was there no intermiſſion of this evil? Were there no lucid intervals, wherein ſomething good might be found in the heart of man?" We are not here to conſider, what the grace of God might occaſionally work in his ſoul. And abſtracted from this, we have no reaſon to believe, there was any intermiſſion of that evil. For God who *ſaw the whole imagination of the thoughts of his heart to be* only *evil*, ſaw likewiſe, that it was always the ſame, that it *was only evil* continually: every year, every day, every hour, every moment. He never deviated into good.

II. Such is the authentic account of the whole race of mankind, which he who knoweth what is in man, who ſearcheth the heart and trieth the reins, hath left upon record for our inſtruction. Such were all men before God brought the flood upon the earth. We are, *ſecondly*, to enquire, Whether they are the ſame now?

1. And this is certain, the ſcripture gives us no reaſon, to think any otherwiſe of them. On the contrary, all the above-cited paſſages of ſcripture, refer to thoſe who lived after the flood. It was above a thouſand years after, that God declared by *David* concerning the children of men, *They are all gone out of the way* of truth and holineſs, *there is none righteous, no, not one.* And to this

this bear all the prophets witneſs, in their ſeveral generations. So *Iſaiah*, concerning God's peculiar people, (and certainly the Heathens were in *no better* condition) *The whole head is ſick, and the whole heart faint. From the ſole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no ſoundneſs, but wounds and bruiſes and putrifying ſores.* The ſame account is given by all the apoſtles, yea, by the whole tenor of the oracles of God. From all theſe we learn, concerning man in his natural ſtate, unaſſiſted by the grace of God, that *all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart* are ſtill *evil, only evil,* and that *continually.*

2. And this account of the preſent ſtate of man, is confirmed by daily experience. It is true, the natural man diſcerns it not: and this is not to be wondered at. So long as a man born blind, continues ſo, he is ſcarce ſenſible of his want. Much leſs, could we ſuppoſe a place where all were born without ſight, would they be ſenſible of the want of it. In like manner, ſo long as men remain, in their natural blindneſs of underſtanding, they are not ſenſible of their ſpiritual wants, and of this in particular. But as ſoon as God opens the eyes of their underſtanding, they ſee the ſtate they were in before; they are then deeply convinced, that *every man living*, themſelves eſpecially, are by nature *altogether vanity*, that is, folly and ignorance, ſin and wickedneſs.

3. We

3. We see, when God opens our eyes, that we were before ἄθεοι ἐν Κόσμῳ· *without* God, or rather *Atheists in the world.* We had by nature no knowledge of God, no acquaintance with him. It is true, as soon as we came to the use of reason, we learned *the invisible things of* God, *even his eternal power and Godhead, from the things that are made.* From things that are seen, we inferred the existence of an eternal, powerful Being, that is not seen. But still, although we acknowledge we had no acquaintance with him. As we know there is an Emperor of *China*, whom yet we do not know; so we knew, there was a King of all the earth; yet we know him not. Indeed we could not; by any of our natural faculties. By none of these could we attain the knowledge of God. We could no more perceive him by our natural understanding, than we could see him with our eyes. For *no one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him. And no one knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Father revealeth him.*

4. * We read of an antient king, who being desirous to know, what was the *natural language* of men, in order to bring the matter to a certain issue; made the following experiment. He ordered two infants as soon as they were born, to be conveyed to a place prepared for them, where they were brought up without any instruction at all, and without ever hearing an human voice.

voice. And what was the event? Why, that when they were at length brought out of their confinement, they spake no language at all; they uttered only inarticulate sounds, like those of other animals. Were two infants in like manner to be brought up from the womb, without being instructed in any religion, there is little room to doubt, but (unless the grace of God interposed) the event would be just the same. They would have no religion at all: they would have no more knowledge of God, than the beasts of the field, than *the wild ass's colt*. Such is *Natural religion!* Abstracted from traditional, and from the influences of God's Spirit.

5. And having no knowledge, we can have no love of God: we cannot love him we know not. Most men *talk* indeed of loving God, and perhaps imagine they do. At least, few will acknowledge they do not love him: but the fact is too plain to be denied. No man loves God by nature, any more than he does a stone, or the earth he treads upon. What we love, we delight in: but no man has naturally any delight in God. In our natural state, we cannot conceive, how any one should delight in him. We take no pleasure in him at all: he is utterly tasteless to us. To love God! It is far above, out of our sight. We cannot, naturally, attain unto it.

6. * We have by nature not only no love, but no fear of God. It is allowed indeed, that most men have, sooner or later, a kind of senseless,

leſs, irrational fear, properly called *ſuperſtition*, though the blundering *Epicureans* gave it the name of *religion*. Yet even this is not natural, but acquired; chiefly by converſation or from example. By nature, God *is not in all our thoughts*: we leave him to manage his own affairs, to ſit quietly, as we imagine, in heaven, and leave us on earth to manage ours. So that we have no more of the fear of God before our eyes, than of the love of God in our hearts.

7. Thus are all men *Atheiſts in the world*. But Atheiſm itſelf does not ſcreen us from *idolatry*. In his natural ſtate, every man born into the world is a rank idolater. Perhaps indeed we may not be ſuch in the vulgar ſenſe of the word. We do not, like the idolatrous Heathens, worſhip molten or graven images. We do not bow down to the ſtock of a tree, to the work of our own hands. We do not pray to the angels or ſaints in heaven, any more than to the ſaints that are upon the earth. But what then? We *have ſet up* our *idols in* our *hearts*: and to theſe we bow down and worſhip them: we worſhip ourſelves, when we pay that honour to ourſelves which is due to God only. Therefore all *pride* is idolatry: it is aſcribing to ourſelves what is due to God alone. And altho' pride was not made for man, yet where is the man that is born without it? But hereby we rob God of his unalienable right, and idolatrouſly uſurp his glory.

8. * But

8. * But pride is not the only ſort of idolatry, which we are all by nature guilty of. *Satan* has ſtamped his own image on our heart in *ſelf-will* alſo. *I will*, ſaid he, before he was caſt out of heaven, *I will ſit upon the ſides of the north.* I will do my own will and pleaſure, independently on that of my Creator. The ſame does every man born into the world ſay, and that in a thouſand inſtances. Nay, and avow it too, without ever bluſhing upon the account, without either fear or ſhame. Aſk the man, "Why did you do this?" He anſwers, "Becauſe I had a mind to it." What is this but, "Becauſe it was my will;" that is in effect, becauſe the devil and I are agreed: becauſe *Satan* and I govern our actions, by one and the ſame principle. The will of God mean-time is not in his thoughts, is not conſidered in the leaſt degree: although it be the ſupreme rule of every intelligent creature, whether in heaven or earth, reſulting from the eſſential, unalterable relation, which all creatures bear to their Creator.

9. * So far we bear the image of the devil, and tread in his ſteps. But at the next ſtep we leave *Satan* behind, we run into an idolatry whereof he is not guilty: I mean, *Love of the world*, which is now as natural to every man, as to love his own will. What is more natural to us, than to ſeek happineſs in the creature, inſtead of the Creator? To ſeek that ſatisfaction in the works of his hands, which can be found in God only? What more natural than the deſire of the fleſh?

That

That is, of the pleaſure of ſenſe in every kind? Men indeed talk magnificently of deſpiſing theſe low pleaſures, particularly men of learning and education. They affect to ſit looſe to the gratification of thoſe appetites, wherein they ſtand with a level with the beaſts that periſh. But it is mere affectation: for every man is conſcious to himſelf, that in this reſpect he is by nature a very beaſt. Senſual appetites, even thoſe of the loweſt kind, have, more or leſs, the dominion over him. They lead him captive, they drag him to and fro, in ſpite of his boaſted reaſon. The man, with all his good breeding and other accompliſhments, has no pre-eminence over the goat: nay, it is much to be doubted, whether the beaſt has not the pre-eminence over him? Certainly he has, if we may hearken to one of their modern oracles, who very decently tells us:

" Once in a ſeaſon, beaſts too taſte of love:
" Only the beaſt of reaſon is its ſlave,
" And in that folly drudges all the year."

A conſiderable difference indeed, it muſt be allowed, there is between man and man, ariſing (beſide that wrought by preventing grace) from difference of conſtitution, and of education. But notwithſtanding this, who, that is not utterly ignorant of himſelf, can here caſt the firſt ſtone at another? Who can abide the teſt of our bleſſed

Lord's

Lord's comment on the ſeventh commandment? *He that looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart?* So that one knows not which to wonder at moſt, the ignorance or the inſolence of thoſe men, who ſpeak with ſuch diſdain of them that are overcome by deſires, which every man has felt in his own breaſt! The deſire of every pleaſure of ſenſe, innocent or not, being natural to every child of man.

10. * And ſo is *the deſire of the eye*, the deſire of the pleaſures of the imagination. Theſe ariſe either from great, or beautiful, or uncommon objects: if the two former do not coincide with the latter; for perhaps it would appear upon a diligent enquiry, that neither *grand* nor *beautiful* objects pleaſe, any longer than they are *new*: that when the novelty of them is over, the greateſt part, at leaſt, of the pleaſure they give is over; and in the ſame proportion as they become familiar, they become flat and inſipid. But let us experience this ever ſo often, the ſame deſire will remain ſtill. The inbred thirſt continues fixt in the ſoul: nay the more it is indulged, the more it increaſes, and incites us to follow after another, and yet another object; altho' we leave every one with an abortive hope, and a deluded expectation. Yea

" The hoary fool, who many days
Has ſtruggled with continued ſorrow,
Renews

Renews his hope, and fondly lays
The desperate bet upon to-morrow!

"To-morrow comes! 'Tis noon! 'Tis night!
This day like all the former flies:
Yet on he goes, to seek delight
To-morrow, till to-night he dies!"

11. * A third symptom of this fatal disease the love of the world, which is so deeply rooted in our nature, is *the pride of life*, the desire of praise, of *the honour that cometh of men*. This the greatest admirers of human nature allow to be strictly natural: as natural as the sight or hearing, or any other of the external senses. And are they ashamed of it, even men of letters, men of refined and improved understanding? So far from it, that they glory therein! They applaud themselves for their love of applause! Yea, eminent *Christians*, so called, make no difficulty of adopting the saying of the old, vain Heathen, *Animi dissoluti est & nequam negligere quid de se homines sentiant:* Not to regard what men think of us, is the mark of a wicked and abandoned mind." So that to go calm and unmoved *thro' honour and dishonour*, thro' *evil report and good report*, is with them a sign of one that is indeed *not fit to live*; *away with such a fellow from the earth*. But would one imagine, that these men had ever heard of Jesus Christ or his apostles? Or that they knew who it was that said, *How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not*

not the honour which cometh of God *only?* But if this be really so, if it be impossible to believe, and consequently to please God, so long as we *receive* or *seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of* God *only:* then in what a condition are all mankind! The Christians as well as Heathens! Since they all *seek honour one of another!* Since it is as natural for them so to do, themselves being the judges, as it is to see the light which strikes upon their eye, or to hear the sound which enters their ear: yea, since they account it the sign of a virtuous mind, to seek the praise of men; and of a vicious one, to be content with *the honour that cometh of* God *only!*

III. 1. I proceed to draw a few inferences from what has been said. And, *first*, from hence we may learn one grand, fundamental difference between Christianity, considered as a system of doctrines, and the most refined Heathenism. Many of the ancient Heathens have largely described the vices of particular men. They have spoken much against their covetousness or cruelty, their luxury or prodigality. Some have dared to say, That "no man is born without vices, of one kind or another." But still, as none of them were apprized of the fall of man, so none of them knew of his total corruption. They knew not, that all men were empty of all good, and filled with all manner of evil. They were wholly ignorant of the entire depravation of the whole

whole human nature, of every man born in the world, in every faculty of his ſoul, not ſo much by thoſe particular vices, which reign in particular perſons, as by the general flood of Atheiſm and idolatry, of pride, ſelf-will and love of the world. This therefore is the firſt, grand, diſtinguiſhing point between Heatheniſm and Chriſtianity. The one acknowledges, That many men are infected with many vices, and even born with a pronenefs to them; but ſuppoſes withal, that in ſome the natural good much overbalances the evil. The other declares, That all men are *conceived in ſin*, and *ſhapen in wickedneſs*: that hence there is in every man a *carnal mind, which is enmity againſt* God, *which is not, cannot be ſubject to* his *law*, and which ſo infects the whole ſoul, that *there dwelleth in* him, *in his fleſh*, in his natural ſtate, *no good thing*; but *all the imagination of the thoughts of his heart*, is *evil*, only *evil*, and that *continually*.

2. Hence we may, *ſecondly*, learn, That all who deny this, call it *original ſin*, or by any other title, are but Heathens ſtill, in the fundamental point which differences Heatheniſm from Chriſtianity. They may indeed allow, That men have many vices: that ſome are born with us: and that conſequently we are not born altogether ſo wiſe or ſo virtuous, as we ſhould be: there being few that will roundly affirm, "We are born with as much propenſity to good as to evil, and that every man is by nature as virtuous and wiſe,

as

as *Adam* was at his creation." But here is the shibboleth: is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or, to come back to the text, Is *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually?* Allow this and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an Heathen still.

3. * We may learn from hence, in the *third* place, what is the proper nature of religion, of the religion of Jesus Christ. It is Θεραπεία ψυχῆς· God's method of healing a soul which is *thus diseased.* Hereby the great Physician of souls applies medicines to heal *this sickness*; to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties. God heals all our Atheism, by the knowledge of himself, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; by giving us faith, a divine evidence and conviction of God and of the things of God: in particular, of this important truth, Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me.* By repentance and lowliness of heart, the deadly disease of pride is healed: that of self-will by resignation, a meek and thankful submission to the will of God. And for the love of the world in all its branches, the love of God is the sovereign remedy. Now this is properly religion, *faith* thus *working by love*, working the genuine, meek humility, entire deadness of the world, with a loving, thankful acquiescence in and conformity to the whole will and word of God.

4. Indeed

4. Indeed if man were not thus fallen, there would be no need of all this. There would be no occasion for this work of the heart, this *renewal in the spirit of our mind*. The *superfluity of godliness* would then be a more proper expression than the *superfluity of naughtiness*. For an outside religion without any godliness at all, would suffice to all rational intents and purposes. It does accordingly suffice, in the judgment of those who deny this corruption of our nature. They make very little more of religion than the famous Mr. *Hobbes* did of reason. According to him, reason is only, "A well-ordered train of words:" according to them, religion is only a well-ordered train of words and actions. And they speak consistently with themselves: for if the inside be not *full of wickedness*, if this be clean already, what remains, but to *cleanse the outside of the cup?* Outward reformation, if their supposition be just, is indeed the one thing needful.

5. But ye have not so learned the oracles of God. Ye know, that he who seeth what is in man, gives a far different account both of nature and grace, of our fall and our recovery. Ye know that the great end of religion is, to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness, which we sustained by the sin of our first parent. Ye know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal

of

of our ſoul in the image of God, after the likeneſs of him that created it, is no other than a poor farce, and a mere mockery of God, to the deſtruction of our own ſoul. O beware of all thoſe teachers of lies, who would palm this upon you for Chriſtianity! Regard them not, altho' they ſhould come unto you with *all the deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs*, with all ſmoothneſs of language, all decency, yea beauty and elegance of expreſſion, all profeſſions of earneſt good will to you, and reverence for the holy ſcriptures. Keep to the plain, old *faith, once delivered to the ſaints*, and delivered by the Spirit of God to our hearts. Know your diſeaſe! Know your cure! Ye were born in ſin: therefore *ye muſt be born again*, born of God. By nature ye are wholly corrupted: by grace ye ſhall be wholly renewed. *In* Adam ye *all died:* in the ſecond *Adam, in* Chriſt ye *all are made alive.* You *that are dead in ſins hath he quickened:* he hath already given you a principle of life, even *faith in* him *who loved* you, *and gave himſelf for* you! Now *go on from faith to faith*, until your whole ſickneſs be healed, and all that *mind be in you, which was alſo in* Chriſt Jeſus!

SERMON XLV.

THE NEW BIRTH.

JOHN iii. 7.

Ye must be born again.

1. IF any doctrine within the whole compass of Christianity may be properly termed fundamental, they are doubtless these two, the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: the former relating to that great work, which God does *for us*, in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work, which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature. In order of time, neither of these is before the other: in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also *born of the Spirit*: but in order of thinking, as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth. We first conceive his wrath to be turned away, and then his Spirit to work in our hearts.

2. How great importance then must it be of to every child of man, throughly to understand these fundamental doctrines? From a full conviction of this, many excellent men have wrote very large-

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ly concerning juſtification, explaining every point relating thereto, and opening the ſcriptures which treat upon it. Many likewiſe have wrote on the new birth; and ſome of them largely enough: but yet not ſo clearly as might have been deſired; nor ſo deeply and accurately: having either given a dark, abſtruſe account of it, or a ſlight and ſuperficial one. Therefore a full, and at the ſame time, a clear account of the new birth ſeems to be wanting ſtill: ſuch as may enable us to give a ſatisfactory anſwer to theſe three queſtions, *firſt*, Why muſt we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine of the new birth? *Secondly*, How muſt we be born again? What is the nature of the new birth? And *thirdly*, Wherefore muſt we be born again? To what end is it neceſſary? Theſe queſtions, by the aſſiſtance of God, I ſhall briefly and plainly anſwer, and then ſubjoin a few inferences which will naturally follow.

I. 1. And, *firſt*, Why muſt we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine? The foundation of it lies near as deep as the creation of the world: * In the ſcriptural account whereof we read, † *And* God, the three-one God, *ſaid*, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeneſs*. *So* God *created man in his own image, in the image of* God *created he him:* not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his own immortality, a ſpiritual being, endued with underſtanding, freedom of will, and various affections: not

 merely

† Gen. i. 26, 27.

merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having *dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth:* but chiefly in his *moral image*, which according to the apostle, is ‡ *righteousness and true holiness*. In this image of God was man made. God *is love*: accordingly man at his creation was full of love: which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words and actions. God is full of justice, mercy and truth: so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity: and so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot. Otherwise God could not have pronounced *him*, as well as all the other works of his hands, § *very good*. This he could not have been, had he not been pure from sin, and filled with righteousness and true holiness. For there is no medium: if we suppose an intelligent creature, not to love God, not to be righteous and holy, we necessarily suppose him not to be good at all: much less to be *very good*.

2. But although man was made in the image of God, yet he was not made immutable. This would have been inconsistent with that state of trial, in which God was pleased to place him. He was therefore created able to stand, and yet liable to fall. And this God himself apprized him of, and gave him a solemn warning against it. Nevertheless *man* did *not abide in honour:* he fell from his high estate. He *ate of the tree whereof*

‡ Eph. iv 24. § Gen. 31.

whereof the Lord *had commanded him, Thou ſhalt not eat thereof.* By this wilful act of diſobedience to his Creator, this flat rebellion againſt his Sovereign, he openly declared, that he would no longer have God to rule over him: that he would be governed by his own will, and not the will of him that created him, and that he would not ſeek his happineſs in God, but in the world, in the works of his hands. Now God had told him before, *In the day that thou eateſt* of that fruit *thou ſhalt ſurely die.* And the word of the Lord cannot be broken. Accordingly in that day he did die: he died to God, the moſt dreadful of all deaths. He loſt the life of God: he was ſeparated from him, in union with whom his ſpiritual life conſiſted. The body dies, when it is ſeparated from the ſoul; the ſoul, when it is ſeparated from God. But this ſeparation from God *Adam* ſuſtained in the day, the hour he ate of the forbidden fruit. And of this he gave immediate proof; preſently ſhewing by his behaviour, that the love of God was extinguiſhed in his ſoul, which was now *alienated from the life of* God. Inſtead of this, he was now under the power of ſervile fear, ſo that he fled from the preſence of the Lord. Yea, ſo little did he retain even of the knowledge of him, who filleth heaven and earth, that he endeavoured to * *hide himſelf from the* Lord God, *among the trees of the garden!* So had he loſt both the knowledge

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* Gen. iii. 8.

and the love of God, without which the image of God could not subsist. Of this therefore he was deprived at the same time, and became unholy as well as unhappy. In the room of this, he had sunk into pride and self-will, the very image of the devil, and into sensual appetites and desires, the image of the beasts that perish.

3. If it be said, "Nay but that threatning, *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, refers to temporal death and that alone, to the death of the body only;" The answer is plain; to affirm this, is flatly and palpably to make God a liar: to aver, that the God of truth positively affirmed a thing contrary to truth. For it is evident, *Adam* did not *die* in this sense, *in the day that he ate thereof.* He lived in the sense opposite to this death, above nine hundred years after. So that this cannot possibly be understood of the death of the body, without impeaching the veracity of God. It must therefore be understood of spiritual death, the loss of the life and image of God.

4. And *in* Adam *all died*, all human-kind, all the children of men who were then in *Adam*'s loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him, comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly *dead in sin:* entirely void of the life of God, void of the image of God, of all that *righteousness and holiness*, wherein *Adam* was created. Instead of this every man born into the world, now bears the image

image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires. This then is the foundation of the new birth, the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is, that being *born in sin*, we must be *born again*. Hence every one that is born of a woman, must be born of the Spirit of God.

II. 1. But how must a man be born again? What is the nature of the new birth? This is the *second* question. And a question it is, of the highest moment that can be conceived. We ought not therefore in so weighty a concern, to be content with a slight enquiry; but to examine it with all possible care, and to ponder it in our hearts, 'till we fully understand this important point, and clearly see, how we are to be born again.

2. Not that we are to expect any minute, philosophical account, of the *manner how* this is done. Our Lord sufficiently guards us against any such expectation, by the words immediately following the text: wherein he reminds *Nicodemus* of as indisputable a fact, as any in the whole compass of nature: which notwithstanding the wisest man under the sun, is not able fully to explain. *The wind bloweth where it listeth*, not by thy power or wisdom, *and thou hearest the sound thereof:* thou art absolutely assured, beyond all doubt, that it doth blow. *But thou canst not tell, whence it cometh, neither whither it goeth.* The

precise manner how it begins and ends, rises and falls, no man can tell. *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Thou mayst be as absolutely assured of the fact, as of the blowing of the wind: but the precise manner how it is done, how the Holy Spirit works this in the soul, neither thou nor the wisest of the children of men is able to explain.

3. However it suffices for every rational and Christian purpose, that without descending into curious, critical enquiries, we can give a plain scriptural account of the nature of the new birth. This will satisfy every reasonable man, who desires only the salvation of his soul. The expression, being *born again*, was not first used by our Lord in his conversation with *Nicodemus*. It was well known before that time, and was in common use among the Jews, when our Saviour appeared among them. When an adult Heathen was convinced, that the Jewish religion was of God, and desired to join therein, it was the custom to baptize him first, before he was admitted to circumcision. And when he was baptized, he was said to be *born again*: by which they meant, that he who was before a child of the devil was now adopted into the family of God, and accounted one of his children. This expression therefore which *Nicodemus* being *a teacher in Israel*, ought to have understood well, our Lord uses in conversing with him: only in a stronger sense than he was accustomed to. And this might

might be the reaſon of his aſking, *How can theſe things be?* They cannot be literally. *A man* cannot *enter a ſecond time into his mother's womb and be born.* But they may, ſpiritually. A man may be *born from above*, *born of* God, *born of the Spirit:* in a manner which bears a very near analogy to the natural birth.

4. Before a child is born into the world, he has eyes, but ſees not: he has ears, but does not hear. He has a very imperfect uſe of any other ſenſe. He has no knowledge of any of the things of the world, or any natural underſtanding. To that manner of exiſtence which he then has, we do not even give the name of life. It is then only when a man is born, that we ſay he begins to live. For as ſoon as he is born, he begins to ſee the light, and the various objects with which he is encompaſſed. His ears are then opened, and he hears the ſounds which ſucceſſively ſtrike upon them. At the ſame time all the other organs of ſenſe begin to be exerciſed upon their proper objects. He likewiſe breathes and lives in a manner wholly different from what he did before. How exactly doth the parallel hold, in all theſe inſtances? While a man is in a mere natural ſtate, before he is born of God, he has, in a ſpiritual ſenſe, eyes and ſees not; a thick impenetrable veil lies upon them. He has ears, but hears not; he is utterly deaf to what he is moſt of all concerned to hear. His other ſpiritual ſenſes are

all locked up; he is in the ſame condition as if he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God, no intercourſe with him; he is not at all acquainted with him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of ſpiritual or eternal things. Therefore though he is a living man, he is a dead Chriſtian. But as ſoon as he is born of God, there is a total change in all theſe particulars. The *eyes of* his *underſtanding are opened* (ſuch is the language of the great apoſtle:) and he who of old *commanded light to ſhine out of darkneſs ſhining on his heart*, he ſees *the light of the glory of* God, his glorious love, *in the face of* Jeſus Chriſt. His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, ſaying, *Be of good chear, thy ſins are forgiven thee: Go and ſin no more.* This is the purport of what God ſpeaks to his heart: Although perhaps not in theſe very words. He is now ready to hear whatſoever *He that teacheth man knowledge* is pleaſed from time to time to reveal to him. He "feels in his heart (to uſe the language of our church) the mighty working of the Spirit of God:" not in a groſs, carnal ſenſe, as the men of the world ſtupidly and wilfully miſunderſtand the expreſſion: though they have been told again and again, we mean thereby neither more nor leſs than this: he feels, is inwardly ſenſible of the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart. He feels, he is conſcious of a *peace which paſſeth all underſtanding*.

ſtanding. He many times feels ſuch a joy in God, as is *unſpeakable and full of glory*. He feels *the love of* God *ſhed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghoſt which is given unto him*. And all his ſpiritual ſenſes are then *exerciſed to diſcern* ſpiritual *good and evil*. By the uſe of theſe he is daily increaſing in the knowledge of God, of Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent, and of all the things pertaining to his inward kingdom. And now he may be properly ſaid *to live*: God having quickened him by his Spirit, he is alive to God through Jeſus Chriſt. He lives a life which the world knoweth not of; a *life* which *is hid with* Chriſt *in* God. God is continually breathing, as it were, upon the ſoul, and his ſoul is breathing unto God. Grace is deſcending into his heart, and prayer and praiſe aſcending to heaven. And by this intercourſe between God and man, this fellowſhip with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of ſpiritual reſpiration, the life of God in the ſoul is ſuſtained: and the child of God grows up, 'till he comes to *the full meaſure of the ſtature of* Chriſt.

5. From hence it manifeſtly appears, what is the nature of the new birth. It is that great change which God works in the ſoul, when he brings it into life: when he raiſes it from the death of ſin, to the life of righteouſneſs. It is the change wrought in the whole ſoul by the almighty Spirit of God, when it is *created anew in* Chriſt Jeſus, when it is *renewed after the image*

of God, *in righteouſneſs and true holineſs:* when the love of the world is changed into the love of God, pride into humility, paſſion into meekneſs; hatred, envy, malice, into a ſincere, tender, diſintereſted love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the *earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh* mind, is turned into the *mind which was in* Chriſt Jeſus. This is the nature of the new birth. *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

III. 1. It is not difficult for any who has conſidered theſe things, to ſee the neceſſity of the new birth, and to anſwer the *third* queſtion, wherefore, to what ends is it neceſſary that we ſhould be born again? It is very eaſily diſcerned, that this is neceſſary, firſt, in order to holineſs. For what is holineſs, according to the oracles of God? Not a bare external religion, a round of outward duties, how many ſoever they be, and how exactly ſoever performed. No: goſpel-holineſs is no leſs than the image of God ſtamped upon the heart. It is no other than the whole mind which was in Chriſt Jeſus. It conſiſts of all heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one. It implies ſuch a continual, thankful love, to him who hath not with-held from us his Son, his only Son, as makes it natural and in a manner neceſſary, to us, to love every child of man; as fills us with *bowels of mercies, kindneſs, gentleneſs, long-ſuffering*. It is ſuch a love

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of God as teaches us to be blameleſs in all manner of converſation; as enables us to preſent our ſouls and bodies, all we are, and all we have, all our thoughts, words and actions, a continual ſacrifice to God, acceptable through Chriſt Jeſus. Now this holineſs can have no exiſtence, 'till we are renewed in the image of our mind. It cannot commence in the ſoul, 'till that change be wrought, 'till by the power of the higheſt overſhadowing us we are *brought from darkneſs to light, from the power of* Satan *unto* God: that is, 'till we are born again; which therefore is abſolutely neceſſary in order to holineſs.

2. But *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the* Lord, ſhall ſee the face of God in glory. Of conſequence the new birth is abſolutely neceſſary, in order to eternal ſalvation. Men may indeed flatter themſelves (ſo deſperately wicked and ſo deceitful is the heart of man!) that they may live in their ſins 'till they come to the laſt gaſp, and yet afterwards live with God. And thouſands do really believe, that they have found a *broad way which leadeth* not *to deſtruction*. What danger, ſay they, can a woman be in, that is ſo *harmleſs* and ſo *virtuous?* What fear is there that ſo *honeſt* a man, one of ſo ſtrict *morality*, ſhould miſs of heaven? Eſpecially, if over and above all this, they conſtantly attend on church and ſacrament. One of theſe will aſk with all aſſurance, "What, ſhall not I do as well as my neighbours?" Yes, as well as your unholy

unholy neighbours; as well as your neighbours that die in their ſins. For you will all drop into the pit together, into the nethermoſt hell. You will all lie together in the lake of fire, *the lake of fire burning with brimſtone.* Then, at length you will ſee (but God grant you may ſee it before!) the neceſſity of holineſs in order to glory: and conſequently, of the new birth, ſince none can be holy, except he be born again.

3. For the ſame reaſon, except he be born again, none can be happy even in this world. For it is not poſſible, in the nature of things, that a man ſhould be happy who is not holy. Even the poor, ungodly poet could tell us,

Nemo malus felix:

No wicked man is happy. The reaſon is plain. All unholy tempers are uneaſy tempers. Not only malice, hatred, envy, jealouſy, revenge, create a preſent hell in the breaſt, but even the ſofter paſſions, if not kept within due bounds, give a thouſand times more pain than pleaſure. Even *hope*, when *deferred* (and how often muſt this be the caſe?) *maketh the heart ſick.* And every deſire which is not according to the will of God, is liable to *pierce us through with many ſorrows.* And all thoſe general ſources of ſin, pride, ſelf-will and idolatry, are in the ſame proportion as they prevail, general ſources of miſery. Therefore as long as theſe reign in any ſoul, happineſs has no place there. But they muſt reign, 'till the bent of our nature is changed, that is, 'till we are born again. Conſequently

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the new birth is abſolutely neceſſary in order to happineſs in this world, as well as in the world to come.

IV. I propoſed in the laſt place, to ſubjoin a few inferences which naturally follow from the preceding obſervations.

1. And, *firſt*, It follows, that baptiſm is not the new birth: they are not one and the ſame thing. Many indeed ſeem to imagine, they are juſt the ſame: at leaſt, they ſpeak as if they thought ſo: but I do not know, that this opinion is publickly avowed, by any denomination of Chriſtians whatever. Certainly it is not, by any within theſe kingdoms, whether of the eſtabliſhed church, or diſſenting from it. The judgment of the latter is clearly declared, in their † *large Catechiſm*: *Q.* "What are the parts of a ſacrament? *A.* The parts of a ſacrament are two: The one, an outward and ſenſible ſign; the other, an inward and ſpiritual grace thereby ſignified. *Q.* What is baptiſm? Baptiſm is a ſacrament, wherein Chriſt hath ordained the waſhing with water, to be a ſign and ſeal of regeneration, by his Spirit." Here it is manifeſt, baptiſm, the ſign, is ſpoken of as diſtinct from regeneration, the thing ſignified.

In the church-catechiſm likewiſe the judgment of our church is declared with the utmoſt clearneſs. "What meaneſt thou by this word, ſacrament? I mean an outward and viſible ſign of an inward and ſpiritual grace. What is the outward

† Q. 163. 165.

ward part, or form in baptiſm? Water wherein the perſon is baptized, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt. What is the inward part or thing ſignified? A death unto ſin, and a new birth unto righteouſneſs." Nothing therefore is plainer, than that according to the church of *England*, baptiſm is not the new birth.

But indeed the reaſon of the thing is ſo clear and evident, as not to need any other authority. For what can be more plain, than that the one is an external, the other an internal work? That the one is a viſible, the other an inviſible thing, and therefore wholly different from each other: the one being an act of man, purifying the body; the other, a change wrought by God in the ſoul. So that the former is juſt as diſtinguiſhable from the latter, as the ſoul from the body, or water from the Holy Ghoſt.

2. From the preceding reflections, we may, *ſecondly*, obſerve, that as the new birth is not the ſame thing with baptiſm, ſo it does not always accompany baptiſm: they do not conſtantly go together. A man may poſſibly be *born of water*, and yet not be *born of the Spirit*. There may ſometimes be the outward ſign, where there is not the inward grace. I do not now ſpeak with regard to infants: it is certain, our church ſuppoſes, that all who are baptized in their infancy, are at the ſame time born again. And it is allowed, that the whole office for the baptiſm of infants proceeds upon this ſuppoſition.

tion. Nor is it an objection of any weight againſt this, that we cannot comprehend, how this work can be wrought in infants? For neither can we comprehend, *how* it is wrought in a perſon of riper years. But whatever be the caſe with infants, it is ſure all of riper years who are baptized are not at the ſame time born again. *The tree is known by its fruits:* and hereby it appears too plain to be denied, that divers of thoſe who were children of the devil before they were baptized, continue the ſame after baptiſm: *for the works of* their *Father they do*; they continue ſervants of ſin, without any pretence either to inward or outward holineſs.

3. * A third inference which we may draw from what has been obſerved, is, that the new birth is not the ſame with ſanctification. This is indeed taken for granted by many: particularly by an eminent writer, in his late treatiſe on "the nature and grounds of Chriſtian regeneration." To wave ſeveral other weighty objections which might be made to that tract, this is a palpable one: it all along ſpeaks of regeneration as a progreſſive work, carried on in the ſoul by ſlow degrees, from the time of our firſt turning to God. This is undeniably true of ſanctification; but of regeneration, the new birth, it is not true. This is a part of ſanctification, not the whole; it is the gate of it, the entrance into it. When we are born again, then our ſanctification, our inward and outward holineſs begins. And

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thenceforward we are gradually to *grow up in him who is our head* This expreſſion of the apoſtle admirably illuſtrates the difference between one and the other, and farther points out the exact analogy there is between natural and ſpiritual things. A child is born of a woman in a moment, or at leaſt in a very ſhort time. Afterward he gradually and ſlowly grows, 'till he attains to the ſtature of a man. In like manner a child is born of God, in a ſhort time, if not in a moment. But it is by ſlow degrees that he afterward grows up to the meaſure of the full ſtature of Chriſt. The ſame relation therefore which there is, between our natural birth and our growth, there is, alſo between our new birth, and our ſanctification.

4. * One point more we may learn from the preceding obſervations. But it is a point of ſo great importance, as may excuſe the conſidering it the more carefully, and proſecuting it at ſome length. What muſt one who loves the ſouls of men, and is grieved that any of them ſhould periſh, ſay to one whom he ſees living in ſabbath-breaking, drunkenneſs, or any other wilful ſin? What can he ſay, if the foregoing obſervations are true, but *you muſt be born again.* "No, ſays a zealous man, that cannot be. How can you talk ſo uncharitably to the man? Has he not been baptized already? He cannot be born again now." Can he not be born again? Do you affirm this? Then he cannot be ſaved. Though he be as old as *Nicodemus*

codemus was, yet *except he be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of* God. Therefore in ſaying, "He cannot be born again," you in effect deliver him over to damnation. And where lies the uncharitableneſs now? On my ſide, or on yours? I ſay, he may be born again, and ſo become an heir of ſalvation. You ſay, "He cannot be born again." And if ſo, he muſt inevitably periſh. So you utterly block up his way to ſalvation, and ſend him to hell, out of mere charity!

* But perhaps the ſinner himſelf, to whom in real charity we ſay, "*You muſt be born again,*" has been taught to ſay, "I defy your new doctrine; I need not be born again. I was born again when I was baptized. What! Would you have me deny my baptiſm?" I anſwer, firſt, There is nothing under heaven which can excuſe a lie. Otherwiſe I ſhould ſay to an open ſinner, If you have been baptized, do not own it. For how highly does this aggravate your guilt? How will it increaſe your damnation? Was you devoted to God at eight days old, and have you been all theſe years devoting yourſelf to the devil? Was you, even before you had the uſe of reaſon, conſecrated to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt? And have you ever ſince you had the uſe of it, been flying in the face of God, and conſecrating yourſelf to *Satan?* Does the abomination of deſolation, the love of the world, pride, anger, luſt, fooliſh deſire, and a whole train of vile affections ſtand where it ought

not?

not? Have you ſet up all theſe accurſed things in that ſoul, which was once a *temple of the Holy Ghoſt?* Set apart for *an habitation of* God *through the Spirit?* Yea, ſolemnly given up to him? And do you glory in this, that you once belonged to God? O be aſhamed! Bluſh! Hide yourſelf in the earth! Never boaſt more of what ought to fill you with confuſion, to make you aſhamed before God and man! I anſwer, ſecondly, You have already denied your baptiſm; and that in the moſt effectual manner. You have denied it a thouſand and a thouſand times; and you do ſo ſtill day by day. For in your baptiſm, you renounced the devil and all his works. Whenever therefore you give place to him again, whenever you do any of the works of the devil, then you deny your baptiſm. Therefore you deny it by every wilful ſin: by every act of uncleanneſs, drunkenneſs, or revenge: by every obſcene or profane word; by every oath that comes out of your mouth. Every time you profane the day of the Lord, you thereby deny your baptiſm: yea, every time you do any thing to another, which you would not he ſhould do to you. I anſwer, thirdly, Be you baptized or unbaptized, you muſt be born again. Otherwiſe it is not poſſible you ſhould be inwardly holy: and without inward as well as outward holineſs, you cannot be happy, even in this world; much leſs in the world to come. Do you ſay, "Nay, but I do no harm to any man; I am honeſt

honeſt and juſt in all my dealings; I do not curſe, or take the Lord's name in vain; I do not profane the Lord's day: I am no drunkard; I do not ſlander my neighbour, nor live in any wilful ſin." If this be ſo, it were much to be wiſhed, that all men went as far as you do. But you muſt go farther yet, or you cannot be ſaved: ſtill you muſt be born again. Do you add, "I do go farther yet; for I not only do no harm, but do all the good I can." I doubt that fact; I fear you have had a thouſand opportunities of doing good, which you have ſuffered to paſs by unimproved, and for which therefore you are accountable to God. But if you had improved them all, if you really had done all the good you poſſibly could to all men, yet this does not at all alter the caſe: ſtill you muſt be born again. Without this nothing will do any good to your poor ſinful, polluted ſoul. "Nay, but I conſtantly attend all the ordinances of God: I keep to my church and ſacrament." It is well you do. But all this will not keep you from hell, except you be born again. Go to church twice a day, go to the Lord's table every week, ſay ever ſo many prayers in private, hear ever ſo many good ſermons, read ever ſo many good books, ſtill you muſt be born again: none of theſe things will ſtand in the place of the new birth: no, nor any thing under heaven. Let this therefore, if you have not already experienced this inward work of God, be your continual prayer, "Lord, add this to all thy bleſſings, let

me

me be *born again.* Deny whatever thou pleaſeſt, but deny not this, Let me be *born from above.* Take away whatſoever ſeemeth thee good, reputation, fortune, friends, health. Only give me this, To be *born of the Spirit!* To be received among the children of God. Let me be born, *not of corruptible ſeed, but incorruptible, by the word of* God, *which liveth and abideth for ever.* And then let me daily *grow in grace,* and *in the knowledge of our* Lord *and Saviour* Jeſus Chriſt!"

SERMON.

SERMON XLVI.

THE WILDERNESS STATE.

JOHN xvi. 22.

Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

1. AFTER God had wrought a great deliverance for *Israel*, by bringing them out of the house of bondage, they did not immediately enter into the land which he had promised to their fathers, but *wandered out of the way in the wilderness*, and were variously tempted and distressed. In like manner after God has delivered them that fear him from the bondage of sin and *Satan*; after they are *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus*, yet not many of them immediately enter into *the rest* which *remaineth for the people of* God. The greater part of them wander, more or less, out of the good way into which he hath brought them. They come as it were into a *waste and howling desert*, where they are variously tempted and tormented. And this some, in allusion to the case of the *Israelites*, have termed *a wilderness-state*.

2. Certain

2. Certain it is, that the condition wherein these are, has a right to the tenderest compassion. They labour under an evil and sore disease; though one that is not commonly understood. And for this very reason it is the more difficult for them to find a remedy. Being in darkness themselves, they cannot be supposed to understand the nature of their own disorder. And a few of their brethren, nay perhaps, of their teachers, know either what their sickness is, or how to heal it. So much the more need there is to enquire, *first*, What is the nature of this disease; *secondly*, What is the cause, and *thirdly*, What is the cure of it.

I. And, *first*, What is the nature of this disease, into which so many fall, after they have believed? Wherein does it properly consist? And what are the genuine symptoms of it? It properly consists in the loss of that faith which God once wrought in their heart. They that are *in the wilderness* have not now that divine *evidence*, that satisfactory *conviction of things not seen* which they once enjoyed. They have not now that inward demonstration of the Spirit, which before enabled each of them to say, *The life I live, I live by faith in the Son of* God, *who loved* me *and gave himself for* me. The light of heaven does not now *shine in their hearts*, neither do they *see him that is invisible:* but darkness is again on the face

face of their ſouls, and blindneſs on the eyes of their underſtanding. The Spirit no longer *witneſſes with their ſpirits, that they are the children of* God; neither does he continue, as the Spirit of adoption, *crying in their hearts, Abba, Father.* They have not now a ſure truſt in his love, and a liberty of approaching him with holy boldneſs. *Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him*, is no more the language of their heart: but they are ſhorn of their ſtrength, and become weak and feeble-minded, even as other men.

2. Hence, *ſecondly*, proceeds the loſs of love, which cannot but riſe or fall, at the ſame time, and in the ſame proportion, with true, living faith. Accordingly, they that are deprived of their faith, are deprived of the love of God alſo. They cannot now ſay, Lord, *thou knoweſt all things: thou knoweſt that I love thee.* They are not now happy in God, as every one is, that truly loves him. They do not delight in him as in time paſt, and *ſmell the odour of his ointments.* Once, all their *deſire was unto* him, *and to the remembrance of his name.* But now even their deſires are cold and dead, if not utterly extinguiſhed. And as their love of God is *waxed cold*, ſo is alſo their love of their neighbour. They have not now that zeal for the ſouls of men, that longing after their welfare, that fervent, reſtleſs, active deſire of their being reconciled to God. They do not feel thoſe *bowels of mercies* for the ſheep that are loſt, that tender *compaſſion for the igno-*

rant and them that are out of the way. Once they were *gentle toward all men*, meekly *inſtructing* ſuch as *oppoſed* the truth, and *if any* was *overtaken in a fault, reſtoring ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs.* But after a ſuſpenſe, perhaps of many days, anger begins to regain its power. Yea, peeviſhneſs and impatience thruſt ſore at them that they may fall. And it is well if they are not ſometimes driven, even to *render evil for evil, and railing for railing.*

3. In conſequence of the loſs of faith and love, follows, *thirdly*, Loſs of joy in the Holy Ghoſt. For if the loving conſciouſneſs of pardon be no more, the joy reſulting therefrom cannot remain. If the Spirit does not witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God, the joy that flowed from that inward witneſs, muſt alſo be at an end. And in like manner, they who once *rejoiced with joy unſpeakable, in hope of the glory of* God, now they are deprived of that *hope full of immortality*, are deprived of the joy it occaſioned: as alſo of that which reſulted from a conſciouſneſs of *the love of* God then *ſhed abroad in their hearts.* For the cauſe being removed, ſo is the effect: the fountain being dammed up, thoſe living waters ſpring no more, to refreſh the thirſty ſoul.

4. With loſs of faith and love and joy, there is alſo joined, *fourthly*, the loſs of that peace which once paſt all underſtanding. That ſweet tranquillity of mind, that compoſure of ſpirit is gone.

gone. Painful doubt returns: doubt whether we ever did, and perhaps whether we ever ſhall believe. We begin to doubt, whether we ever did find in our hearts, the real teſtimony of the Spirit? Whether we did not rather deceive our own ſouls, and miſtake the voice of nature for the voice of God? Nay, and perhaps, whether we ſhall ever hear his voice, and find favour in his ſight. And theſe doubts are again joined with ſervile fear, with that *fear* which *hath torment.* We fear the wrath of God, even as before we believed: we fear leſt we ſhould be caſt out of his preſence; and thence ſink again into that fear of death, from which they were before wholly delivered.

5. But even this is not all. For loſs of peace is accompanied with loſs of power. We know, every one who has peace with God through Jeſus Chriſt, has power over all ſin. But whenever he loſes the peace of God, he loſes alſo the power over ſin. While that peace remained, power alſo remained, even over the beſetting ſin; whether it were the ſin of his nature, of his conſtitution, of his education, or his profeſſion: yea, and over thoſe evil tempers and deſires, which 'till then he could not conquer. *Sin* had then *no more dominion over him:* but he hath now no more dominion over ſin. He may ſtruggle indeed, but he cannot overcome; the crown is fallen from his head. His enemies again prevail over him, and more or leſs bring him into bon-

dage. The glory is departed from him, even the kingdom of God which was in his heart. He is dispossessed of righteousness, as well as of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

II. 1. Such is the nature of what many have termed, and not improperly, *the wilderness-state.* But the nature of it may be more fully understood, by enquiring, *secondly*, What are the causes of it? These indeed are various. But I dare not rank among these, the bare, arbitrary, sovereign will of God. He rejoiceth *in the prosperity of his servants:* he delighteth not to *afflict or grieve the children of men.* His invariable *will is our sanctification*, attended with *peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.* These are his own free gifts: and we are assured *the gifts of* God *are*, on his part, *without repentance.* He never repenteth of what he hath given, or desires to withdraw them from us. Therefore he never *deserts* us, as some speak: it is we only that *desert* him.

2. The most usual cause of inward darkness is sin of one kind or another. This it is which generally occasions what is often a complication of sin and misery. And, *first*, Sin of *commission.* This may frequently be observed to darken the soul in a moment: especially if it be a known, a wilful or presumptuous sin. If for instance, a person who is now walking in the clear light of God's countenance, should be any way prevailed on to commit a single act of drunkenness or uncleanness,

uncleanneſs, it would be no wonder if in that very hour he fell into utter darkneſs. It is true, there have been ſome very rare caſes, wherein God has prevented this, by an extraordinary diſplay of his pardoning mercy, almoſt in the very inſtant. But in general, ſuch an abuſe of the goodneſs of God, ſo groſs an inſult on his love, occaſions an immediate eſtrangement from God, and a *darkneſs that may be felt.*

3. But it may be hoped, this caſe is not very frequent; that there are not many who ſo deſpiſe the riches of his goodneſs, as while they walk in his light, ſo groſly and preſumptuouſly to rebel againſt him. That light is much more frequently loſt, by giving way to ſins of *omiſſion.* This indeed does not immediately quench the Spirit, but gradually and ſlowly. The former may be compared to pouring water upon a fire: the latter to withdrawing the fewel from it. And many times will that loving Spirit reprove our neglect, before he departs from us. Many are the inward checks, the ſecret notices he gives, before his influences are withdrawn. So that only a train of omiſſions wilfully perſiſted in, can bring us into utter darkneſs.

4. Perhaps no ſin of omiſſion more frequently occaſions this, than the neglect of private prayer; the want whereof cannot be ſupplied by any other ordinance whatever. Nothing can be more plain, than that the life of God in the ſoul does not continue, much leſs increaſe, unleſs we uſe all

opportunities of communing with God, and pouring out our hearts before him. If therefore we are negligent of this, if we suffer buſineſs, company, or any avocation whatever, to prevent theſe ſecret exerciſes of the ſoul, (or which comes to the ſame thing, to make us hurry them over in a ſlight and careleſs manner) that life will ſurely decay. And if we long or frequently intermit them, it will gradually die away.

5. Another ſin of omiſſion which frequently brings the ſoul of a believer into darkneſs, is the neglect of what was ſo ſtrongly enjoined, even under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, *Thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy neighbour, and not ſuffer ſin upon him: Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.* Now if we do *hate our brother in our heart*, if we do not *rebuke* him when we ſee him in a fault, but *ſuffer ſin upon him*: this will ſoon bring leanneſs into our own ſoul: ſeeing hereby we are *partakers of* his *ſin*. By neglecting to reprove our neighbour, we make his ſin our own. We become accountable for it to God: we ſaw his danger, and gave him no warning. So, *if he periſh in his iniquity*, God may juſtly *require his blood at* our *hands*. No wonder then if by thus grieving the Spirit, we loſe the light of his countenance.

6. A third cauſe of our loſing this, is the giving way to ſome kind of *inward ſin*. For example: we know every one that is *proud in heart is an abomination to the* Lord: and that, although this

this pride of heart ſhould not appear in the outward converſation. Now how eaſily may a ſoul filled with peace and joy, fall into this ſnare of the devil? How natural is it for him to imagine, that he has more grace, more wiſdom or ſtrength than he really has? To *think more highly of himſelf than he ought to think?* How natural, to glory in ſomething he has received, as if he had not received it? But ſeeing God continually *reſiſteth the proud, and giveth grace* only *to the humble*, this muſt certainly obſcure, if not wholly deſtroy the light which before ſhone on his heart.

7. * The ſame effect may be produced by giving place to anger, whatever the provocation or occaſion be: yea, though it were coloured over with the name of *zeal* for the truth, or for the glory of God. Indeed all zeal which is any other than the flame of love, is *earthly, animal, deviliſh.* It is the flame of wrath: It is flat, ſinful anger, neither better, nor worſe. And nothing is a greater enemy to the mild, gentle love of God than this: they never did, they never can, ſubſiſt together in one breaſt. In the ſame proportion as this prevails, love and joy in the Holy Ghoſt decreaſe. This is particularly obſervable in the caſe of *offence*, I mean, anger at any of our brethren, at any of thoſe who are united with us either by civil or religious ties. If we give way to the ſpirit of offence but one hour, we loſe the ſweet influences of the Holy Spirit: ſo that inſtead of amending them we deſtroy ourſelves, and

become an eaſy prey to any enemy that aſſaults us.

8. * But ſuppoſe we are aware of this ſnare of the devil, we may be attacked from another quarter. When fierceneſs and anger are aſleep, and love alone is waking, we may be no leſs endangered by *deſire*, which equally tends to darken the ſoul. This is the ſure effect of any *fooliſh deſire*, any vain or inordinate affection. If we *ſet our affection on things of the earth*, on any perſon or thing under the ſun, if we deſire any thing but God and what tends to God, if we ſeek happineſs in any creature, the jealous God will ſurely contend with us: for he can admit of no rival. And *if* we *will* not *hear* his warning *voice*, and return to him with our whole ſoul; if we continue to grieve him with our idols, and running after other gods, we ſhall ſoon be cold, barren and dry, and *the god of this world* will *blind* and darken *our hearts*.

9. But this he frequently does, even when we do not give way to any poſitive ſin. It is enough, it gives him ſufficient advantage, if we do not *ſtir up the gift of* God *which is in us*: if we do not *agonize* continually *to enter in at the ſtrait gate*: if we do not earneſtly *ſtrive for the maſtery*, and *take the kingdom of heaven by violence*. There needs no more than not to fight, and we are ſure to be conquered. Let us only be careleſs or *faint in our mind*, let us be eaſy and indolent, and our natural darkneſs will ſoon return, and overſpread

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our ſoul. It is enough therefore, if we give way to *ſpiritual ſloth:* this will effectually darken the ſoul. It will as ſurely deſtroy the light of God, if not ſo ſwiftly, as murder or adultery.

10. But it is well to be obſerved, that the cauſe of our darkneſs, (whatſoever it be, whether omiſſion or commiſſion, whether inward or outward ſin) is not always nigh at hand. Sometimes the ſin which occaſioned the preſent diſtreſs, may lie at a conſiderable diſtance. It might be committed days or weeks or months before. And that God now withdraws his light and peace, on account of what was done ſo long ago, is not (as one might at firſt imagine) an inſtance of his ſeverity, but rather a proof of his long-ſuffering and tender mercy. He waited all this time, if haply we would ſee, acknowledge and correct what was amiſs. And in default of this, he at lengths ſhews his diſpleaſure, if thus at laſt he may bring us to repentance.

(H) 1. Another general cauſe of this darkneſs is *ignorance*; which is likewiſe of various kinds. If men know not the ſcriptures, if they imagine there are paſſages either in the Old or New Teſtament, which aſſert that all believers without exception, *muſt* ſometimes be in darkneſs, this ignorance will naturally bring upon them the darkneſs which they expect. And how common a caſe has this been among us? How few are there that do not expect it? And no wonder,

ſeeing they are taught to expect it: ſeeing their guides lead them into this way. Not only the *Myſtic* writers of the *Romiſh* church, but many of the moſt ſpiritual and experimental in our own, (very few of the laſt century excepted) lay it down with all aſſurance, as a plain, unqueſtionable ſcripture-doctrine, and cite many texts to prove it.

2. Ignorance alſo of the work of God in the ſoul, frequently occaſions this darkneſs. Men imagine (becauſe ſo they have been taught, particularly by writers of the *Romiſh* communion, whoſe plauſible aſſertions too many Proteſtants have received without due examination) that they are not always to walk in *luminous faith*: that this is only a *lower diſpenſation*; that as they riſe higher, they are to leave thoſe *ſenſible comforts*, and live by *naked faith*: (*naked* indeed, if it be ſtript both of love and peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt!) That a ſtate of light and joy is good; but a ſtate of *darkneſs* and *dryneſs* is better: that it is by theſe alone we can be *purified* from pride, love of the world, and inordinate ſelf-love; and that therefore we ought neither to expect nor deſire, to *walk in the light* always. Hence it is (though other reaſons may concur) that the main body of pious men in the *Romiſh* church, generally walk in a dark, uncomfortable way, and if ever they receive, ſoon loſe the light of God.

(III.) 1. A third general cauſe of this darkneſs is temptation. When the candle of the Lord firſt ſhines on our head, temptation frequently flees away, and totally diſappears. All is calm within: perhaps without too, while God makes our enemies to be at peace with us. It is then very natural to ſuppoſe, that we ſhall not ſee war any more. And there are inſtances wherein this calm has continued, not only for weeks, but for months or years. But commonly it is otherwiſe: in a ſhort time *the winds blow, the rains deſcend, and the floods ariſe* anew. *They* who *know not either the Son or the Father*, and conſequently, hate his children, when God ſlackens the bridle which is in their teeth, will ſhew that hatred in various inſtances. As of old, *he that was born after the fleſh, perſecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even ſo it is now:* the ſame cauſe ſtill producing the ſame effect. The evil which yet remains in the heart, will then alſo move afreſh: anger and many other *roots of bitterneſs*, will endeavour to ſpring up. At the ſame time, *Satan* will not be wanting, to caſt in his fiery darts: and the ſoul will have to *wreſtle*, not only with the world, *not* only *with fleſh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, with wicked ſpirits in high places.* Now when ſo various aſſaults are made at once, and perhaps with the utmoſt violence, it is not ſtrange if it ſhould occaſion not only heavineſs, but even darkneſs in a weak

believer. More especially, if he was not watching, if these assaults are made in an hour when he looked not for them: if he expected nothing less, but had " fondly told himself

" The day of evil would return no more."

2. The force of those temptations which arise from within, will be exceedingly heightened, if we before thought too highly of ourselves, as if we had been cleansed from all sin. And how naturally do we imagine this, during the warmth of our first love? How ready are we to believe, That God has *fulfilled in* us *the* whole *work of faith with power?* That because we *feel* no sin, we *have* none in us, but the soul is all love? And well may a sharp attack from an enemy whom we supposed not only conquered but slain, throw us into much heaviness of soul, yea, sometimes into utter darkness. Particularly when we *reason* with this enemy, instead of instantly calling upon God, and casting ourselves upon him by simple faith, who *alone knoweth to deliver his out of temptation.*

III. These are the usual causes of this second darkness. Enquire we, *thirdly*, What is the cure of it?

1. * To suppose that this is one and the same in all cases, is a great and fatal mistake: and yet extremely common even among many who pass for

for experienced Chriſtians; yea, perhaps take upon them to be *teachers in Iſrael*, to be the guides of other ſouls. Accordingly they know and uſe but one medicine, whatever be the cauſe of the diſtemper. They begin immediately to apply the promiſes, to *preach the goſpel*, as they call it. To give comfort is the ſingle point at which they aim: in order to which they ſay many ſoft and tender things, concerning the love of God to poor, helpleſs ſinners, and the efficacy of the blood of Chriſt. Now this is *quackery* indeed, and that of the worſt ſort, as it tends, if not to kill men's bodies, yet without the peculiar mercy of God, to *deſtroy both* their *bodies and ſouls in hell*. It is hard to ſpeak of theſe *daubers with untempered mortar*, theſe promiſe-mongers, as they deſerve. They well deſerve the title which has been ignorantly given to others: they are *ſpiritual mountebanks*. They do, in effect, make *the blood of the covenant an unholy thing*. They vilely proſtitute the promiſes of God, by thus applying them to all, without diſtinction. Whereas indeed the cure of ſpiritual, as of bodily diſeaſes, muſt be as various as are the cauſes of them. The firſt thing therefore is, to find out the cauſe, and this will naturally point out the cure.

2. For inſtance. Is it ſin which occaſions darkneſs? What ſin? Is it outward ſin of any kind? Does your conſcience accuſe you of commiting any ſin, whereby you grieve the Holy Spirit of God?

God? Is it on this account that he is departed from you, and that joy and peace are departed with him; and how can you expect they should return, till you put away the accurſed thing? *Let the wicked forſake his way; cleanſe your hands, ye ſinners; put away the evil of your doings.* So ſhall your *light break out of obſcurity: the* Lord *will return and abundantly pardon.*

3. If upon the cloſeſt ſearch, you can find no ſin of commiſſion which cauſes the cloud upon your ſoul, enquire next, if there be not ſome ſin of omiſſion, which ſeparates between God and you? Do you *not ſuffer ſin upon your brother?* Do you reprove them that ſin in your ſight? Do you walk in all the ordinances of God? In public, family, private prayer? If not, and you habitually neglect any one of theſe known duties, how can you expect, that the light of his countenance ſhould continue to ſhine upon you? Make haſte to *ſtrengthen the things that remain:* then your ſoul ſhall live. *To-day, if ye will hear his voice,* by his grace ſupply what is lacking. When you *hear a voice behind you ſaying, This is the way; walk thou in it: harden not your heart:* be no more *diſobedient to the heavenly calling.* Till the ſin, whether of omiſſion or commiſſion, be removed, all comfort is falſe and deceitful. It is only ſkinning the wound over, which ſtill feſters and rankles beneath. Look for no peace within till you are at peace with God;

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which cannot be without *fruits meet for repentance.*

4. But perhaps you are not conſcious of even any *ſin of omiſſion*, which impairs your peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt. Is there not then ſome *inward ſin*, which as a *root of bitterneſs ſprings up* in your heart to *trouble you?* Is not your dryneſs and barrenneſs of ſoul occaſioned by your hearts *departing from the living* God? Has not *the foot of pride come againſt* you? Have you not *thought* of yourſelf *more highly than you ought to think?* Have you not in any reſpect *ſacrificed to your own net, and burnt incenſe to your own drag?* Have you not aſcribed your ſucceſs in any undertaking, to your own courage, or ſtrength, or wiſdom? Have you not boaſted of ſomething *you have received, as though you have not received it?* Have you not gloried *in any thing ſave the croſs of our* Lord Jeſus Chriſt? Have you not ſought after or deſired the praiſe of men? Have you not taken pleaſure in it? If ſo, you ſee the way you are to take. If you have fallen by pride, *humble yourſelf under the mighty hand of* God, *and he will exalt you in due time.* Have not you forced him to depart from you, by giving place to anger? Have you not *fretted yourſelf becauſe of the ungodly*, or *been envious againſt the evil-doers?* Have you not been offended at any of your brethren? Looking at their (real or imagined) ſin, ſo as to ſin yourſelf againſt the great law of love, by eſtranging your heart from them? Then look

unto

unto the Lord, that you may renew your ſtrength, that all this ſharpneſs and coldneſs may be done away, that love and peace and joy may return together, and you may be invariably *kind to each other* and *tender-hearted*; *forgiving one another, even as* God *for* Chriſt's *ſake hath forgiven you.* Have not you given way to any fooliſh deſire? To any kind or degree of inordinate affection? How then can the love of God have place in your heart, till you put away your idols? *Be not deceived:* God *is not mocked:* he will not dwell in a divided heart. As long therefore as you cheriſh *Delilah* in your boſom, he has no place there: it is vain to hope for a recovery of his light, till you pluck out the right-eye and caſt it from you. O let there be no longer delay. Cry to him, that he may enable you ſo to do! Bewail your own impotence and helpleſſneſs; and the Lord being your helper, enter in at the ſtrait gate: take the kingdom of heaven by violence! Caſt out every idol from his ſanctuary, and the glory of the Lord ſhall ſoon appear.

5. Perhaps it is this very thing, the want of ſtriving, *ſpiritual ſloth*, which keeps your ſoul in darkneſs. You dwell at eaſe in the land: there is no war in your coaſts, and ſo you are quiet and unconcerned. You go on in the ſame even track of outward duties, and are content, there to abide. And do you wonder mean-time, that your ſoul is dead? O ſtir yourſelf up before the Lord! Ariſe, and ſhake yourſelf from the duſt:

wreſtle

wreſtle with God for the mighty bleſſing. Pour out your ſoul unto God in prayer, and continue therein with all perſeverance. Watch! Awake out of ſleep and keep awake! Otherwiſe there is nothing to be expected, but that you will be alienated more and more from the light and life of God.

6. If upon the fulleſt and moſt impartial examination of yourſelf, you cannot diſcern that you at preſent give way, either to ſpiritual ſloth, or any other inward or outward ſin, then call to mind the time that is paſt. Conſider your former tempers, words and actions. Have theſe been right before the Lord? *Commune with him in your chamber and be ſtill*, and deſire of him to try the ground of your heart, and bring to your remembrance whatever has at any time offended the eyes of his glory. If the guilt of any unrepented ſin remain on your ſoul, it cannot be but you will remain in darkneſs, till having been *renewed by repentance*, you are again waſhed by faith in the *fountain opened for ſin and uncleanneſs*.

7. Entirely different will be the manner of the cure, if the cauſe of the diſeaſe be not ſin, but *ignorance*. It may be, ignorance of the meaning of ſcripture; perhaps occaſioned by ignorant commentators; ignorant at leaſt in this reſpect, however knowing or learned they may be in other particulars. And in this caſe, that ignorance muſt be removed, before we can remove

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the darkneſs ariſing from it. We muſt ſhew the true meaning of thoſe texts, which have been miſunderſtood. My deſign does not permit me to conſider all the paſſages of ſcripture which have been preſt into this ſervice. I ſhall juſt mention two or three, which are frequently brought to prove, that all believers muſt, ſooner or later, *walk in darkneſs.*

8. One of theſe is *Iſaiah* l. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the* Lord, *and obeyeth the voice of his ſervant, that walketh in darkneſs and hath no light? Let him truſt in the name of the* Lord, *and ſtay upon his* God. But how does it appear either from the text or context, that the perſon here ſpoke of ever had light? One who is *convinced of ſin, feareth the* Lord *and obeyeth the voice of his ſervant.* And him we ſhould adviſe, tho' he was ſtill dark of ſoul, and had never ſeen the light of God's countenance, yet to *truſt in the name of the* Lord, *and ſtay upon his* God. This text therefore proves nothing leſs, than that a believer in Chriſt "muſt ſometimes *walk in darkneſs.*"

9. Another text which has been ſuppoſed to ſpeak the ſame doctrine, is *Hoſea* ii. 14. *I will allure her and bring her into the wilderneſs, and ſpeak comfortably unto her.* Hence it has been inferred, that God will bring every believer *into the wilderneſs*, into a ſtate of deadneſs and darkneſs. But it is certain, the text ſpeaks no ſuch thing. For 1. It does not appear, that it ſpeaks

of

of particular believers at all. It manifeſtly refers to the *Jewiſh* nation; and perhaps, to that only. But if it be applicable to particular perſons, the plain meaning of it is this, I will draw him by love: I will next convince him of ſin, and then comfort him by my pardoning mercy.

10. A third ſcripture from whence the ſame inference has been drawn, is that above recited, *Ye now have ſorrow: but I will ſee you again; and your heart ſhall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.* This has been ſuppoſed to imply, That God would, after a time withdraw himſelf from all believers: and that they could not, till after they had thus ſorrowed, have the joy which no man could take from them. But the whole context ſhews, that our Lord is here ſpeaking perſonally to the apoſtles, and no others; and that he is ſpeaking concerning thoſe particular events, his own death and reſurrection. *A little while*, ſays he, *and ye ſhall not ſee me*, namely, whilſt I am in the grave: *And again, a little while, and ye ſhall ſee me*, when I am riſen from the dead. *Ye will weep and lament, and the world will rejoice: but your ſorrow ſhall be turned into joy—Ye now have ſorrow*, becauſe I am about to be taken from your head. *But I will ſee you again*, after my reſurrection, *and your heart ſhall rejoice. And your joy* which I will then give you, *no man taketh from you.* All this we know was literally fulfilled, in the particular

particular caſe of the apoſtles. But no inference can be drawn from hence, with regard to God's dealings with believers in general.

11. A fourth text (to mention no more) which has been frequently cited, in proof of the ſame doctrine, is, 1 *Pet.* iv. 12. *Beloved, think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.* But this is full as foreign to the point as the preceding. The text, literally rendered, runs thus. *Beloved, wonder not at the burning, which is among you, which is for your trial.* Now however this may be accommodated to inward trials, in a ſecondary ſenſe, yet primarily it doubtleſs refers to martyrdom, and the ſufferings connected with it. Neither therefore is this text any thing at all to the purpoſe for which it is cited. And we may challenge all men to bring one text either from the Old or New Teſtament, which is any more to the purpoſe than this.

12. "But is not darkneſs much more profitable for the ſoul than light? Is not the work of God in the heart, moſt ſwiftly and effectually carried on, during a ſtate of inward ſuffering? Is not a believer more ſwiftly and throughly purified, by ſorrow than by joy? By anguiſh and pain and diſtreſs and ſpiritual martyrdoms, than by continual peace?" So the *Myſtics* teach: ſo it is written in their books; but not in *the oracles of* God. The ſcripture no where ſays, that the abſence

fence of God beſt perfects his work in the heart! Rather his preſence, and a clear communion with the Father and the Son. A ſtrong conſciouſneſs of this will do more in an hour, than his abſence in an age. Joy in the Holy Ghoſt will far more effectually purify the ſoul, than the want of that joy. And the peace of God is the beſt means of refining the ſoul from the droſs of earthly affections. Away then with the idle conceit, that the kingdom of God is divided againſt itſelf: that the peace of God and joy in the Holy Ghoſt are obſtructive of righteouſneſs: and that *we are ſaved* not *by faith*, but by unbelief; not by hope, but by deſpair!

13. So long as men dream thus, they may well *walk in darkneſs*: nor can the effect ceaſe, till the cauſe is removed. But yet we muſt not imagine, it will immediately ceaſe, even when the cauſe is no more. When either ignorance or ſin has cauſed darkneſs, one or the other may be removed, and yet the light which was obſtructed thereby, may not immediately return. As it is the free gift of God, he may reſtore it, ſooner or later, as it pleaſes him. In the caſe of ſin, we cannot reaſonably expect, that it ſhould immediately return. The ſin began before the puniſhment, which may therefore juſtly remain, after the ſin is at an end. And even in the natural courſe of things, tho' a wound cannot be healed while the dart is ſticking in the fleſh, yet neither

neither is it healed as ſoon as that is drawn out; but foreneſs and pain may remain long after.

14. Laſtly, If darkneſs be occaſioned by manifold, heavy and unexpected temptations, the beſt way of removing and preventing this is, to teach believers always to expect temptation: ſeeing they dwell in an evil world, among wicked, ſubtle, malicious ſpirits, and have an heart capable of all evil. Convince them that the whole work of ſanctification, is not (as they imagined) wrought at once: that when they firſt believe, they are but as new-born babes, who are gradually to grow up, and may expect many ſtorms, before they come to the full ſtature of Chriſt. Above all, let them be inſtructed, when the ſtorm is upon them, not to reaſon with the devil, but to pray; to pour out their ſouls before God, and ſhew him of their trouble. And theſe are the perſons unto whom chiefly we are to apply the great and precious promiſes: (not to the ignorant, till the ignorance is removed; much leſs to the impenitent ſinner.) To theſe we may largely and affectionately declare the loving kindneſs of God our Saviour, and expatiate upon his tender mercies, which have been ever of old. Here we may dwell upon the faithfulneſs of God, whoſe *word is tried to the uttermoſt*, and upon the virtue of that blood which was ſhed for us, to *cleanſe us from all ſin*. And God will then bear witneſs to his word, and bring their ſouls out

out of trouble. He will say, *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the* Lord *is risen upon thee.* Yea, and that light, if thou walk humbly and closely with God, will shine more and more *unto the perfect day.*

SERMON

SERMON XLVII.

1 PETER i. 6.

Now for a ſeaſon, if need be, ye are in heavineſs through manifold temptations.

1. IN the preceding diſcourſe I have particularly ſpoken of that *darkneſs* of mind, into which thoſe are often obſerved to fall, who once walked in the light of God's countenance. Nearly related to this is the *heavineſs* of ſoul, which is ſtill more common, even among believers: indeed almoſt all the children of God, experience this, in an higher or lower degree. And ſo great is the reſemblance between one and the other, that they are frequently confounded together: and we are apt to ſay indifferently, ſuch an one is in *darkneſs*, or ſuch an one is in *heavineſs*; as if they were equivalent terms, one of which implied no more than the other. But they are far, very far from it. Darkneſs is one thing; heavineſs is another. There is a difference, yea a wide, an eſſential difference, between the former and the latter. And ſuch a difference it is, as all the children of God are deeply concern'd to underſtand: otherwiſe nothing will be more eaſy than for them to ſlide out of heavineſs into darkneſs.

neſs. In order to prevent this, I will endeavour to ſhew,

I. What manner of perſons thoſe were, to whom the apoſtle ſays, *Ye are in heavineſs:* II. What kind of heavineſs they were in. III. What were the cauſes, and IV. What were the ends of it. I ſhall conclude with ſome inferences.

I. 1. I am in the firſt place to ſhew, what manner of perſons thoſe were, to whom the apoſtle ſays, *Ye are in heavineſs.* And, firſt, It is beyond all diſpute, that they were believers, at the time the apoſtle thus addreſt them. For ſo he expreſly ſays, ver. 5. Ye *who are kept through the power of* God *by* faith *unto ſalvation*: again, ver. 7. he mentions, *the trial of their* faith, *much more precious than that of gold which periſheth.* And yet again, ver. 9, he ſpeaks of their *receiving the end of their faith, the ſalvation of their ſouls.* At the ſame time therefore that they were *in heavineſs*, they were poſſeſſed of living faith. Their heavineſs did not deſtroy their faith: they ſtill *endured, ſeeing him that is inviſible.*

2. Neither did their heavineſs deſtroy their peace, the peace that paſſeth all underſtanding, which is inſeparable from true, living faith, this we may eaſily gather from the ſecond verſe: wherein the apoſtle prays, Not that *grace and peace* may be given them, but only, that it may *be multiplied unto them*; that the bleſſing which

they already enjoyed, might be more abundantly beſtowed upon them.

3. The perſons to whom the apoſtle here ſpeaks were alſo full of a living hope. For thus he ſpeaks, ver. 3. *Bleſſed be the* God *and Father of our* Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again*, me and you, all of us who are *ſanctified by the Spirit*, and enjoy the *ſprinkling of the blood of* Jeſus Chriſt, *unto a living hope unto an inheritance*, that is unto a living hope of an inheritance *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*. So that notwithſtanding their heavineſs, they ſtill retained an hope full of immortality.

4. And they ſtill *rejoiced in hope of the glory of* God. They were filled with joy in the Holy Ghoſt. So ver. 8. the apoſtle having juſt mentioned the final *revelation of* Jeſus Chriſt (namely when he cometh to judge the world) immediately adds, *In whom though now ye ſee him not* (not with your bodily eyes) *yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory*. Their heavineſs therefore was not only conſiſtent with living hope, but alſo with *joy unſpeakable:* at the ſame time they were thus heavy, they nevertheleſs rejoiced with *joy full of glory*.

5. In the midſt of their heavineſs they likewiſe ſtill enjoyed the love of God which had been ſhed abroad in their hearts, *Whom*, ſays the apoſtle, *having not ſeen, ye love*. Tho' ye have not yet ſeen him face to face, yet knowing him by faith,

faith, ye have obeyed his word *My ſon give me thy heart.* He is your God, and your love, and deſire of your eyes, and your *exceeding great reward.* Ye have ſought and found happineſs in him: ye *delight in the* Lord, *and he hath given you your hearts deſire.*

6. Once more, though they were heavy, yet were they holy: they retained the ſame power over ſin. They were ſtill *kept* from this *by the power of* God: they were *obedient children, not faſhioned according to their former deſires*, but *as he that had called them is holy*, ſo were they *holy in all manner of converſation. Knowing they were redeemed by the precious blood of* Chriſt, *a lamb without ſpot and without blemiſh*, they had thro' the *faith and hope which they had in* God, *purified their ſouls by the Spirit.* So that upon the whole, their heavineſs well conſiſted with faith, with hope, with love of God and man! with the peace of God, with joy in the Holy Ghoſt, with inward and outward holineſs. It did no way impair, much leſs deſtroy, any part of the work of God in their hearts. It did not at all interfere with that *ſanctification of the Spirit*, which is the root of all true *obedience*; neither with the happineſs which muſt needs reſult from *grace and peace* reigning in the heart.

II. 1. Hence we may eaſily learn what kind of heavineſs they were in: the ſecond thing which I ſhall endeavour to ſhew. The word in the ori-

ginal is λυπηθέντες, *made ſorry, grieved*, from λύπη, *grief* or *ſorrow*. This is the conſtant, literal meaning of the word: and this being obſerved, there is no ambiguity in the expreſſion, nor any difficulty in underſtanding it. The perſons ſpoken of here were *grieved:* the heavineſs they were in, was neither more nor leſs than *ſorrow* or *grief*; a paſſion which every child of man is well acquainted with.

2. It is probable, our tranſlators rendered it *heavineſs* (tho' a leſs common word) to denote two things, firſt, The degree; and next, the continuance of it. It does indeed ſeem, that it is not a ſlight or inconſiderable degree of grief which is here ſpoken of, but ſuch as makes a ſtrong impreſſion upon, and ſinks deep into the ſoul. Neither does this appear to be a tranſient ſorrow, ſuch as paſſes away in an hour: but rather ſuch as having taken faſt hold of the heart, is not preſently ſhaken off, but continues for ſome time, as a ſettled temper, rather than a paſſion, even in them that have living faith in Chriſt, and the genuine love of God in their hearts.

3. Even in theſe this heavineſs may ſometimes be ſo deep as to overſhadow the whole ſoul, to give a colour, as it were, to all the affections, ſuch as will appear in the whole behaviour. It may likewiſe have an influence over the body: particularly in thoſe that are either of a naturally weak

weak conſtitution, or weakened by ſome accidental diſorder, eſpecially of the nervous kind. In many caſes we find *the corruptible body preſſes down the ſoul:* in this, the ſoul rather preſſes down the body, and weakens it more and more. Nay, I will not ſay, that deep and laſting ſorrow of heart, may not ſometimes weaken a ſtrong conſtitution, and lay the foundation of ſuch bodily diſorders, as are not eaſily removed. And yet all this may conſiſt with a meaſure of that *faith which* ſtill *worketh by love.*

4. This may well be termed a *fiery trial:* and though it is not the ſame with that the apoſtle ſpeaks of in the fourth chapter, yet many of the expreſſions there uſed concerning outward ſufferings, may be accommodated to this inward affliction. They cannot indeed with any propriety be applied to them that are *in darkneſs:* theſe do not, cannot *rejoice*; neither is it true, that *the Spirit of glory and of* God *reſteth upon* them. But he frequently doth on thoſe that are *in heavineſs*, ſo that though *ſorrowful, yet* are they *always rejoicing.*

III. 1. But to proceed to the third point. What are the cauſes of ſuch ſorrow or heavineſs in a true believer? The apoſtle tells us clearly; *Ye are in heavineſs*, ſays he, *through manifold temptations:* ποικίλοις *manifold*; not only many in number, but of many kinds. They may be varied

and diverſified a thouſand ways, by the change or addition of numberleſs circumſtances. And his very diverſity and variety make it more difficult to guard againſt them. Among theſe we may rank all bodily diſorders: particularly acute diſeaſes, and violent pain of every kind, whether affecting the whole body or the ſmalleſt part of it. It is true, ſome who have enjoyed uninterrupted health and have felt none of theſe, may make light of them, and wonder that ſickneſs or pain of body, ſhould bring heavineſs upon the mind. And perhaps, one in a thouſand is of ſo peculiar a conſtitution, as not to feel pain, like other men. So hath it pleaſed God to ſhew his almighty power by producing ſome of theſe prodigies of nature, who have ſeemed, not to regard pain at all, though of the ſevereſt kind: if that contempt of pain was not owing partly to the force of education, partly to a preternatural cauſe; to the power either of good or evil ſpirits, who raiſed thoſe men above the ſtate of mere nature. But abſtracting from theſe particular caſes, it is in general a juſt obſervation,

That "Pain is perfect miſery, and extreme
Quite overturns all patience."

And even where this is prevented by the grace of God, where men do *poſſeſs their ſouls in patience*, it may nevertheleſs occaſion much inward heavineſs, the ſoul ſympathizing with the body.

2. All diſeaſes of long continuance, though leſs painful, are apt to produce the ſame effect. Wher

When God *appoints over* us *conſumption* or *the chilling and burning ague*, if it be not ſpeedily removed, it will not only *conſume the eyes*, but *cauſe ſorrow of heart*. This is eminently the caſe with regard to all thoſe which are termed *nervous diſorders*. And faith does not overturn the courſe of nature: natural cauſes ſtill produce natural effects. Faith no more hinders the *ſinking of the ſpirits* (as it is called) in an hyſteric illneſs, than the riſing of the pulſe in a fever.

3. * Again, when *calamity cometh as a whirlwind*, and poverty *as an armed man*, is this a little temptation? Is it ſtrange, if it occaſion ſorrow and heavineſs? Although this alſo may appear but a ſmall thing, to thoſe that ſtand at a diſtance, or who look and *paſs by on the other ſide*, yet it is otherwiſe to them who feel it. *Having food and raiment* indeed (the latter word σκεπασματα implies lodging as well as apparel) we may, if the love of God is in our hearts, *be therewith content*. But what ſhall they do, who have none of theſe? Who as it were *embrace the rock for a ſhelter?* Who have only the earth to lie upon, and only the ſky to cover them? Who have not a dry, or warm, much leſs a clean abode for themſelves and their little ones? No, nor cloathing to keep themſelves, or thoſe they love next themſelves, from pinching cold, either by day or night? I laugh at the ſtupid Heathen, crying out

Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in ſe
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit!

Has poverty nothing worſe in it than this, that it *makes men liable to be laughed at?* 'Tis a ſign this idle poet talked by rote of the things which he knew not. Is not want of food ſomething worſe than this? God pronounced it as a curſe upon man, that he ſhould earn it by *the ſweat of his brow.* But how many are there in this Chriſtian country, that toil and labour, and ſweat, and have it not at laſt, but ſtruggle with wearineſs and hunger together? Is it not worſe, for one after an hard day's labour, to come back to a poor, cold, dirty, uncomfortable lodging, and to find there not even the food which is needful to repair his waſted ſtrength? You that live at eaſe in the earth, that want nothing but eyes to ſee, ears to hear, and hearts to underſtand how well God has dealt with you: is it not worſe to ſeek bread, day by day, and find none? Perhaps to find the comfort alſo of five or ſix children, crying for what he has not to give. Were it not, that he is reſtrained by an unſeen hand, would he not ſoon *curſe* God *and die?* O want of bread! Want of bread! Who can tell what this means, unleſs he hath felt it himſelf? I am aſtoniſhed, it occaſions no more than heavineſs even in them that believe!

4. * Perhaps next to this we may place the death of thoſe who were near and dear unto us: of a tender parent, and one not much declined into the vale of years: of a beloved child juſt riſing into life, and claſping about our heart: of a friend, that was as our own ſoul: next the grace of

of God, the laſt, beſt gift of heaven. And a thouſand circumſtances may inhance the diſtreſs; perhaps the child, the friend, died in our embrace! Perhaps, was ſnatched away, when we looked not for it! Flouriſhing, cut down like a flower! In all theſe caſes, we not only may, but ought to be affected: it is the deſign of God, that we ſhould. He would not have us ſtocks and ſtones: he would have our affections regulated, not extinguiſhed. Therefore

"Nature unreprov'd may drop a tear:"

There may be ſorrow without ſin.

5. * A ſtill deeper ſorrow we may feel, for thoſe who are dead while they live, on account of the unkindneſs, ingratitude, apoſtacy of thoſe, who were united to us in the cloſeſt ties. Who can expreſs what a lover of ſouls may feel, for a friend, a brother dead to God? For an huſband, a wife, a parent, a child, ruſhing into ſin as an horſe into the battle, and in ſpite of all arguments and perſuaſions, haſting to work out his own damnation? And this anguiſh of ſpirit may be heightened to an inconceivable degree, by the conſideration, that he who is now poſting to deſtruction, once ran well in the way of life. Whatever he was in time paſt, ſerves now to no other purpoſe, than to make our reflections on what he is, more piercing and afflictive.

6. In all theſe circumſtances we may be aſſured our great adverſary will not be wanting to improve his opportunity. He who is always

walking about ſeeking whom he may devour, will then eſpecially uſe all his power, all his ſkill, if haply he may gain any advantage, over the ſoul that is already caſt down. He will not be ſparing of his fiery darts, ſuch as are moſt likely to find an entrance, and to fix moſt deeply in the heart, by their ſuitableneſs to the temptation that aſſaults it. He will labour to inject unbelieving, or blaſphemous, or repining thoughts: he will ſuggeſt, that God does not regard, does not govern the earth: or at leaſt that he does not govern it aright, not by the rules of juſtice and mercy. He will endeavour to ſtir up the heart againſt God, to renew our natural enmity againſt him. And if we attempt to fight him with his own weapons, if we begin to *reaſon* with him, more and more heavineſs will undoubtedly enſue, if not utter darkneſs.

7. It has been frequently ſuppoſed, that there is another cauſe (if not of darkneſs, at leaſt) of heavineſs, namely, God's withdrawing himſelf from the ſoul, becauſe it is his ſovereign will. Certainly he will do this, if we grieve his holy Spirit, either by outward or inward ſin: either by doing evil, or neglecting to do good: by giving way either to pride or anger, to ſpiritual ſloth, to fooliſh deſire or inordinate affection. But that he ever withdraws himſelf, becauſe he *will*, merely becauſe it is his good pleaſure, I abſolutely deny: there is no text in all the bible which gives any colour for ſuch a ſuppoſition. Nay it is a ſuppoſition contrary not only to many particular

ticular texts, but to the whole tenor of ſcripture. It is repugnant to the very nature of God: it is utterly beneath his majeſty and wiſdom, (as an eminent writer ſtrongly expreſſes it) "to play at *bo-peep* with his creatures." It is inconſiſtent both with his juſtice and mercy, and with the ſound experience of all his children.

8. One more cauſe of heavineſs is mentioned by many of thoſe who were termed myſtic authors. And the notion has crept in, I know not how, even among plain people who have no acquaintance with them. I cannot better explain this, than in the words of a late writer, who relates this, as her own experience. "I continued ſo happy in my Beloved, that altho' I ſhould have been forced to live a vagabond in a deſert, I ſhould have found no difficulty in it. This ſtate had not laſted long, when in effect, I found myſelf led into a deſert.—I found myſelf in a forlorn condition, altogether poor, wretched and miſerable.—The proper ſource of this grief is, the knowledge of ourſelves, by which we find, that there is an extreme unlikeneſs between God and us. We ſee ourſelves moſt oppoſite to him, and that our inmoſt ſoul is entirely corrupted, depraved and full of all kind of evil and malignity, of the world and fleſh and all ſorts of abominations:" from hence it has been inferred, That the knowledge of ourſelves, without which we ſhould periſh everlaſtingly, *muſt* even after we

have attained juſtifying faith, occaſion the deepeſt heavineſs.

9. But upon this I would obſerve, 1. In the preceding paragraph, this writer ſays, "Hearing I had not a true faith in Chriſt, I offered myſelf up to God, and immediately felt his love." It may be ſo; and yet it does not appear, That this was juſtification. 'Tis more probable, it was no more then what are uſually termed the *drawings of the Father*. And if ſo, the heavineſs and darkneſs which followed, was no other than conviction of ſin, which in the nature of things muſt precede that faith whereby we are juſtified. 2. Suppoſe ſhe was juſtified almoſt the ſame moment ſhe was convinced of wanting faith, there was then no time for that gradually increaſing ſelf-knowledge which uſes to precede juſtification. In this caſe therefore it came after, and was probably the more ſevere, the leſs it was expected. 3. It is allowed, there will be a far deeper, a far clearer and fuller knowledge of our inbred ſin, of our total corruption by nature, after juſtification, than ever there was before it. But this need not occaſion darkneſs of ſoul: I will not ſay That it *muſt* bring us into heavineſs. Were it ſo, the apoſtle would not have uſed that expreſſion, *if need be:* for there would be an abſolute, indiſpenſable need of it, for all that would know themſelves: that is in effect, for all that would know the perfect love of God, and be thereby *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints*

ſaints in light. But this is by no means the caſe: On the contrary, God may increaſe the knowledge of ourſelves to any degree, and increaſe in the ſame proportion the knowledge of himſelf and the experience of his love. And in this caſe, there would be no "deſert, no miſery, no forlorn condition;" but love and peace and joy gradually ſpringing up into everlaſting life.

IV. 1. For what ends then, (which was the fourth thing to be conſidered) does God permit heavineſs to befal ſo many of his children? The apoſtle gives us a plain and direct anſwer to this important queſtion; *That the trial of their faith, which is much more precious than gold that periſheth though it be tried by fire, may be found unto praiſe and honour and glory, at the revelation of* Jeſus Chriſt, ver. 7. There may be an alluſion to this, in that well-known paſſage of the fourth chapter (altho' it primarily relates to quite another thing, as has been already obſerved:) *Think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, but rejoice that ye are partakers of the ſufferings of* Chriſt: *That when his glory ſhall be revealed, ye may likewiſe rejoice with exceeding great joy*, ver. 12, &c.

2. Hence we learn, that the firſt and great end of God's permitting the temptations which bring heavineſs on his children, is the trial of their faith, which is tried by theſe, even as gold by the fire. Now we know, gold tried in the fire,

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is purified thereby, is ſeparated from its droſs. And ſo is faith, in the fire of temptation; the more it is tried, the more it is purified. Yea, and not only purified, but alſo ſtrengthened, confirmed, increaſed abundantly, by ſo many more proofs of the wiſdom and power, the love and faithfulneſs of God. This then, to increaſe our faith is one gracious end of God's permitting thoſe manifold temptations.

3. They ſerve to try, to purify, to confirm and increaſe that living hope alſo, whereunto *the* God *and Father of our* Lord Jeſus Chriſt *hath begotten us again of his abundant mercy*. Indeed our hope cannot but increaſe, in the ſame proportion with our faith. On this foundation it ſtands: believing in his name, living by faith in the Son of God, we hope for, we have a confident expectation of, the glory which ſhall be revealed. And conſequently, whatever ſtrengthens our faith; increaſes our hope alſo. At the ſame time it increaſes our joy in the Lord, which cannot but attend an hope full of immortality. In this view the apoſtle exhorts believers in the other chapter, *Rejoice that ye are partakers of the ſufferings of* Chriſt. On this very account, *happy are you; for the Spirit of glory and of* God *reſteth upon you*. And hereby ye are enabled, even in the midſt of ſufferings to *rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory*.

4. They rejoice the more, becauſe the trials which increaſe their faith and hope, increaſe their love alſo: both their gratitude to God for

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all his mercies, and their good-will to all mankind. Accordingly the more deeply ſenſible they are, of the loving-kindneſs of God their Saviour, the more is their heart inflamed with love to him *who firſt loved us*. The clearer and ſtronger evidence they have of the glory that ſhall be revealed, the more do they love him who hath purchaſed it for them, and *given them the earneſt* thereof *in their hearts*. And this, the increaſe of their love, is another end of the temptations permitted to come upon them.

5. Yet another is, Their advance in holineſs; holineſs of heart and holineſs of converſation: the latter naturally reſulting from the former; for a good tree will bring forth good fruit. And all inward holineſs is the immediate fruit of the faith that worketh by love. By this the bleſſed Spirit purifies the heart from pride, ſelf-will, paſſion; from love of the world, from fooliſh and hurtful deſires, from vile and vain affections. Beſide that ſanctified afflictions have (thro' the grace of God) an immediate and direct tendency to holineſs. Thro' the operation of his Spirit, they humble more and more, and abaſe the ſoul before God. They calm and meeken our turbulent ſpirit, tame the fierceneſs of our nature, ſoften our obſtinacy and ſelf-will, crucify us to the world; and bring us to expect all our ſtrength from, and to ſeek all our happineſs in God.

6. And all theſe terminate in that great end, That our faith, hope, love and holineſs, *may be found*

found (if it doth not yet appear) *unto praiſe* from God himſelf, *and honour* from men and angels, *and glory* aſſigned by the great Judge to all that have endured to the end. And this will be aſſigned in that awful day to every man *according to his works*, according to the work which God had wrought in his heart, and the outward works which he has wrought for God: and likewiſe according to what he had ſuffered; ſo that all theſe trials are unſpeakable gain. So many ways do theſe *light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!*

7. Add to this the advantage which others may receive, by ſeeing our behaviour under affliction. We find by experience, example frequently makes a deeper impreſſion upon us than precept. And what examples have a ſtronger influence, not only on thoſe who are partakers of like precious faith, but even on them who have not known God, than that of a ſoul calm and ſerene in the midſt of ſtorms, ſorrowful yet always rejoicing: meekly accepting whatever is the will of God, however grievous it may be to nature: ſaying in ſickneſs and pain, *The cup which my Father hath given me ſhall I not drink it?* In loſs or want, *The* Lord *gave: the* Lord *hath taken away: bleſſed be the name of the* Lord!

V. 1. I am to conclude with ſome inferences. And, firſt, How wide is the difference between *darkneſs* of ſoul and *heavineſs?* Which nevertheleſs are ſo generally confounded with each other, even by experienced Chriſtians! Darkneſs, or the wilderneſs-ſtate implies a total loſs of joy in the Holy Ghoſt: heavineſs does not; in the midſt of this we may *rejoice with joy unſpeakable.* They that are in darkneſs have loſt the peace of God; they that are in heavineſs have not: ſo far from it, that at the very time *peace* as well as *grace* may *be multiplied unto* them. In the former, the love of God is waxed cold, if it be not utterly extinguiſhed: in the latter it retains its full force, or rather increaſes daily. In theſe, faith itſelf, if not totally loſt, is however grievouſly decayed. Their evidence and conviction of things not ſeen, particularly of the pardoning love of God, is not ſo clear or ſtrong as in time paſt: and their truſt in him is proportionably weakened. Thoſe, tho' they ſee him not, yet have a clear, unſhaken confidence in God, and an abiding evidence of that love, whereby all their ſins are blotted out. So that as long as we can diſtinguiſh faith from unbelief, hope from deſpair, peace from war, the love of God from the love of the world, we may infallibly diſtinguiſh *heavineſs* from *darkneſs.*

2. We may learn from hence, ſecondly, That there may be need of *heavineſs*, but there can be no need of *darkneſs.* There may be need of

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our being in *heavineſs for a ſeaſon*, in order to the ends above recited: at leaſt, in this ſenſe, as it is a natural reſult of thoſe *manifold temptations*, which are needful to try and increaſe our faith, to confirm and inlarge our hope, to purify our heart from all unholy tempers, and to perfect us in love. And by conſequence they are needful, in order to brighten our crown, and add to our eternal weight of glory. But we cannot ſay, that darkneſs is needful, in order to any of theſe ends. It is no way conducive to them: the loſs of faith, hope, love, is ſurely neither conducive to holineſs, nor to the increaſe of that reward in heaven, which will be in proportion to our holineſs on earth.

3. From the apoſtle's manner of ſpeaking we may gather, thirdly, That even heavineſs is not *always* needful. *Now, for a ſeaſon, if need be:* ſo it is not needful for *all perſons*; nor for any perſon, at *all times*. God is able, he hath both power and wiſdom, to work when he pleaſes, the ſame work of grace, in any ſoul, by other means. And in ſome inſtances he does ſo: he cauſes thoſe whom it pleaſeth him to go on from ſtrength to ſtrength, even till they *perfect holineſs in* his *fear*, with ſcarce any heavineſs at all: as having an abſolute power over the heart of man, and moving all the ſprings of it at his pleaſure. But theſe caſes are rare: God generally ſees good to try *acceptable men in the furnace of affliction*. So that manifold temptations and heavineſs, more

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or leſs, are uſually the portion of his deareſt children.

4. We ought therefore, laſtly, to watch and pray and uſe our utmoſt endeavours to avoid falling into darkneſs. But we need not be ſollicitous how to avoid, ſo much as how to improve by heavineſs. Our great care ſhould be, ſo to behave ourſelves under it, ſo to wait upon the Lord therein, that it may fully anſwer all the deſign of his love, in permitting it to come upon us: that it may be a means of increaſing our faith, of confirming our hope, of perfecting us in all holineſs. Whenever it comes, let us have an eye to theſe gracious ends, for which it is permitted, and uſe all diligence, that we may not *make void the counſel of* God *againſt ourſelves*. Let us earneſtly *work together with him*, by the grace which he is continually giving us, in *purifying* ourſelves *from all pollution both of fleſh and ſpirit*, and daily *growing in the grace of our* Lord Jeſus Chriſt, till we are received into his everlaſting kingdom!

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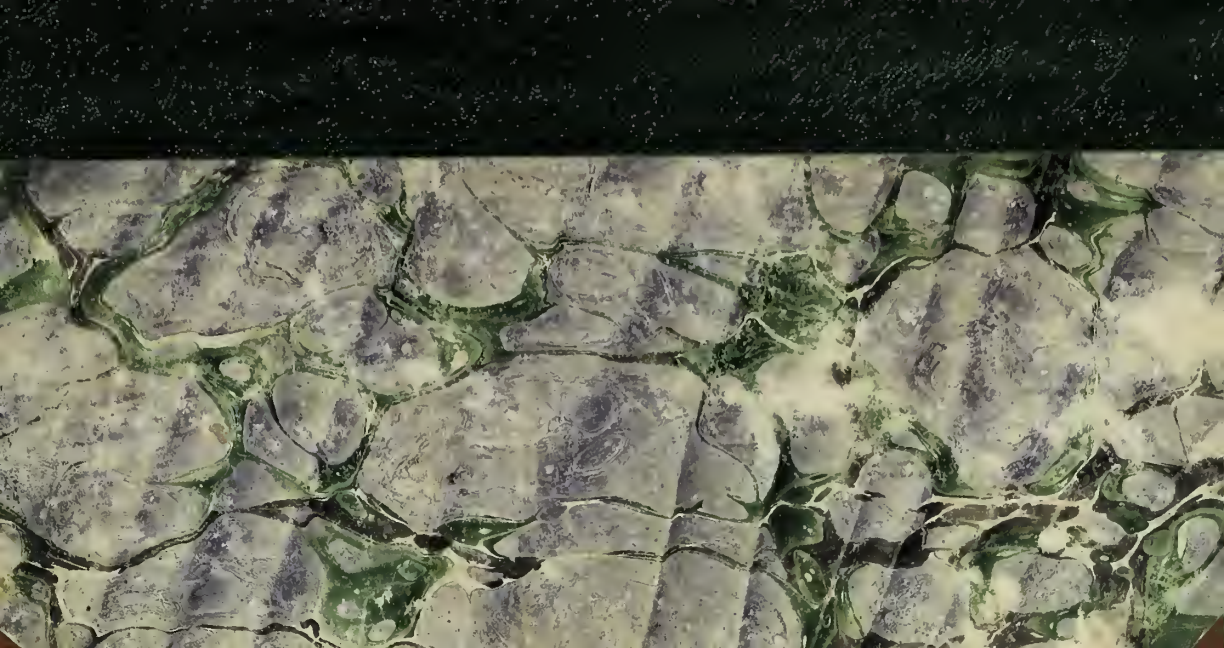
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